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GRAFFITI MENACE RETURNS

Report by Richard Guttridge



A GRAFFITI menace has hit Halesowen with tags sprayed on fences, road signs, street furniture and a phone box.

Pink spray paint has been used to write the tag name 'SODA' across public and private property in Ridgefield Road at Shell Corner. Residents who reported the damage say the graffiti is appearing on an 'almost daily' basis.

It comes a year and a half after a similar spate of graffiti scarred the town. Then the tag 'CNS' was sprayed on walls, garages and vehicles in Spies Lane and Howley Grange Road.

That contributed considerably to the £200,000 of taxpayers' money spent by Dudley Council on cleaning the area of graffiti over the past two years.

This week Halesowen's Councillor Karen Shakespeare said she was disappointed to see the graffiti return to the town's streets.

She said: "We had a particularly bad spate right through Halesowen, we even had it just before the Halesowen in Bloom judges came and had to get it all cleaned up."

"I thought it had calmed down. I know we have worked very hard to cut down the amount of graffiti that is going up."

Criminal

She criticised those responsible for having no pride in the town.

"They don't care about the area," she said. "All the time and money that has gone into getting into a good condition — this is unwanted. There are no words for people who do this, it's a criminal act."

"I don't know what possesses these people to do it."

She suggested that the only way to stamp out graffiti attacks was for the perpetrators to be caught in the act.

"Obviously the problem is the police catching them," Councillor Shakespeare added.

"But Police catching them in the act is the biggest difficulty."

Shell Corner is not the only part of the borough to be defaced by the scrawlers. Parts of Brierley Hill and Wordsley have also been targeted by graffiti vandals in recent weeks.

Neighbourhood policing teams have said they will be increasing patrols in the area in a bid to put a stop to the problem.

Authorities in Dudley have had to spend big to combat the issue.

In the last 12 months, around £100,000 has been spent on removing graffiti following attacks on shops and properties. That came after £95,000 was paid from council coffers to repair damage between April 2013 and April 2014 — all at a time when the council is facing huge spending cuts.

Action plan to boost mental health service

AN action plan has been drawn up to improve care for people with mental illnesses in the Black Country.

Health chiefs in Dudley and Walsall have drawn up a joint plan of action for how they will work together to improve services.

The scheme is part of the mental health crisis care concordat, which is a national agreement between services and agencies involved in the care and support of people in crisis which sets out how organisations can work together to make sure that people receive urgent mental health care.

Mona Mafouz, clinical lead for mental health at Dudley clinical commissioning group, said: "The concordat sets clear expectations about the standard of crisis care people should be able to expect in Dudley and it is a huge step forward. We must keep up momentum on this and support people who have a mental health problem to move towards recovery."

Matt Bowsher, Dudley Council's boss of adult social care, said: "Our action plan draws together a range of sectors and organisations. We are all committed to positive mental health."

Idea for glass walkway at campus axed

FRESH plans have been lodged for a £3 million performing arts centre at Halesowen College after concerns about the original designs were raised by fire chiefs.

The new complex was due to be connected to other buildings at the Whittingham Road site by a glass walkway, which the college had hoped to use as an exhibition space and break area for students.

But fire officers said as the link way would be the main escape route for the block in an emergency, it would need to be left clear. Revised designs have now been submitted for a stand alone complex after bosses said they would not be able to use the glazed walkway as hoped.

The performing arts centre is the latest stage of a revamp at the site, with £20m being invested in replacing buildings. It will provide teaching rooms and rehearsal space for students on music, drama and dance courses. The college has been struggling to provide enough space for the growing number of students taking performing arts courses. Some currently having to travel off campus to use facilities at Benjamins, a function hall in the town centre.

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DEATH

Inquiry after man is killed on track

A MAN was killed when he was hit by a train in the Black Country. He was struck near Dudley Port station at around 6.15am on Easter Monday.

Trains were suspended after the incident, reported by the driver of a Virgin Trains service, leading to delays for bank holiday travellers. National Express buses and Midland Metro accepted train tickets to help. A British Transport Police spokesman said: "Inquiries are ongoing. The matter is not being treated as suspicious. Anyone with information is asked to contact 0800 40 50 40."

COMEDY

Grannies aim to conquer America

DANCING granny sensations The Fizzogs have gone to America after being snapped up by two TV stations.

The unique trio's Dancing Grannies routine will be broadcast on TruTV in Los Angeles and a Canadian television station is screening the Black Country troupe's comedy-drama Black By Day.

The transatlantic breakthrough comes on the back of the Fizzogs going viral on the internet last year when their dance at Stourbridge Carnival attracted 1.6 million hits worldwide.

HOMES

Canalside housing decision pending

PLANS to create a new canalside development in Tividale will be decided next week.

Developer Cameron Homes Ltd has submitted proposals to build 60 homes on the site of a former refuse tip to the rear of Tipton Road.

The company believes the land is the ideal location for new homes because of nearby transport links and leisure services.

A decision was due to be made by Sandwell Council last month but members delayed a site visit was needed first.

Members of the planning committee are now set to make a decision on April 15.

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ALEXANDRA IN GRAND SHOW



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Ex-police chief Richard Green

A FORMER Black Country police chief has blasted cuts to forces up and down the country, warning that officers cannot work 'from Costa Coffee with a laptop'.

Richard Green is a retired Chief Superintendent, who previously headed policing in Wolverhampton and Brierley Hill. He believes the level of cuts in the region have amounted to a form of 'vandalism' on front-line policing.

Last month it was revealed up to 2,500 West Midlands Police officers and staff are to be axed in the next four years as the force battles to save £120 million.

Bosses have already been forced to cut £126m from the budget and lose 3,000 people from the payroll since 2010.

Mr Green said: "The cuts undermine some of the most serious aspects of policing. If police officers are not in the community they do not learn about things such as vulnerable young people who might be involved in terrorism, or the abuse of young people."

"They are simply not there to receive messages. You cannot police from Costa Coffee with a laptop. You need to be out in the public."

Mr Green was speaking outside Dud-

ley Police Station last week after a visit by Labour's shadow policing minister, Jack Dromey.

He gave his 'personal support' to Ian Austin and Natasha Millward who are standing for Labour in Dudley North and Dudley South.

He also backed the campaign by Mr Austin, defending a slender Labour majority in Dudley North, to save the front desk at Dudley Police Station from closure. "It should be accessibility for all, not just those lucky enough to come across an officer on patrol or those with access to the internet," he added.

Ex-world champ Hugh backs call for crossing

FORMER world champion cyclist Hugh Porter has backed calls to boost safety on a busy dual carriageway in Halesowen outside a club for aspiring athletes.

Campaigners want action to help provide a safe crossing for people visiting Halesowen Athletic and Cycling Club and homes at A456 Manor Way.

Police have already positioned a speed camera and been carrying out regular speed checks on the 40mph stretch of road outside. It follows a fatal motorbike accident on that stretch of road in the summer of 2013.

Mr Porter, who lives in Tettenhall, is well known as the former BBC cycling commentator, a job held for 30 years. He is also patron of the cycling club which has produced such stars as Olympic cyclist Jess Varnish.

The club want a pedestrian crossing across the busy road as many athletes and cyclists end up stepping over barriers in the central reservation.

Stadium

Mr Porter, in his letter to Dudley Council, said: "Access on foot or bicycle into and out of the stadium is severely restricted due to the lack of a pedestrian crossing in Manor Way. Should a pedestrian crossing be installed it would provide significant benefits not only to members of my club but also to local residents, users of public transport and to the pupils of Manor Way Primary School who would be able to take advantage of the superb sports facilities available at the club."

"I had the great honour to be the cycling commentator of behalf of the BBC at the London Olympics when Halesowen Cycling Club member, Jess Varnish, competed and I consider a pedestrian crossing would provide a wonderful legacy for our local sports stars of tomorrow. I would urge the local community, including local business to support this project."

Cycling Club road team manager David Viner is hoping to gain support towards funding the crossing. "We are as a club working with Dudley Council, who are very positive, to improve access into and out of Manor Abbey Stadium, the will is there, funding is the only issue," he said.

Eddie makes a point on election trail



Steady Eddie – stiletto-wearing Eddie Izzard in Halesowen town centre with Labour's candidate Stephanie Peacock

COMEDIAN Eddie Izzard arrived in Halesowen to back Labour on the General Election campaign trail.

The 53-year-old transvestite waded through Halesowen in stiletto heels and delighted passers-by as he posed for selfies and urged them to vote on May 7. Eddie backed Labour, the party he has supported since he was a boy, over the row on zero hours contracts.

The party wants to make employers give anyone on a zero hours

contract a regular contract after 12 weeks. But it has been accused of hypocrisy by opponents because Labour-run councils, including Dudley, have used them to employ staff in casual roles.

"It's just right wing spin," said Eddie. "Let's get rid of them then no-one will use them. Because the Tories are probably swimming in them. They're bathing in them. Let's just get rid of the things and get it so people can have jobs. It's people on the ground on the low-

est incomes who are having the toughest times. In that recession, rich people didn't skip a beat. Zero hours contracts are just not helping people."

Eddie was in town to back Stephanie Peacock, Labour's candidate in the key marginal seat of Halesowen and Rowley Regis. Conservative James Morris is defending a majority of 2,023. Also standing are Dean Perks for UKIP, John Payne for the Greens and Peter Tyzack for the Liberal Democrats.

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£1m chapel restoration project now under way

A LONG-awaited £1million project to restore the landmark grade II listed Lye and Wollescote Chapels has begun.

Scaffolding has gone up around the building which houses identical Anglican and non-conformist chapels.

When restoration work is completed, the venue will be leased to Dudley Council as a register office.

David Trevi-Smith, project organiser for West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust, said: "This marks the next stage of many years of community proposals led by West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust to repair the Grade II listed building and regenerate it to safeguard this Victorian landmark."

Charitable

"Following successful grant applications to the Heritage Lottery Fund and other charitable sources, the project will create a suite of facilities for use by Dudley Council citizenship and registration services."

"Specialist building contractors Croft Building & Conservation will be on site over the coming months, bringing the historic structure back into a state fit for re-use."

The building will have a waiting lobby and two reception areas as well as a wedding ceremony room and an office for staff. It dates back to 1878 and has been closed for the past 20 years.

The project is looking to set up a friends group which will work alongside the existing small group of dedicated volunteers.

Rates incentive to open toilets to all

COUNCIL bosses in Dudley have approved a scheme which would allow shoppers to use toilet facilities in pubs, cafes and restaurants without having to make a purchase.

It will run at locations across Dudley borough that have lost public toilets.

Dudley Council is offering businesses in the borough a rates reduction if they allow public access to their loos.

Finance boss Councillor Stuart Turner has approved an amendment to the authority's discretionary rate relief policy. It would see businesses offered a £700 per year rates reduction for taking part.

A number of public toilets across the borough were closed by the authority some years ago as part of cost cutting measures, to save up to £150,000 a year.

Park yobs target of police initiative

POLICE are targeting yobs drinking and vandalising King George VI Park in Wordsley.

Neighbourhood officers have been working to establish the new Street Watch project in the town in a bid to curb anti-social behaviour.

Lecture link to London bombing is condemned

MUSLIM leaders in Dudley have condemned extremism following revelations that terrorists who carried out the London 7/7 bombings visited a radical preacher in Dudley.

A jihadist turned MI5 spy Aimen Dean revealed the lecture took place months before the murders of more than 50 people.

The three men – Mohammad Sidique Khan, Shehzad Tanweer and Germaine Lindsay – were part of the four-man group which carried out the attack in London on July 2005.

Fifty two people were killed and more than 700 were injured when four bombs were detonated on London Underground trains and a double-decker bus in Tavistock Square.

In an interview Mr Dean said in his role as an undercover agent he attended a lecture in the winter of 2003 was given by Anwar al-Awlaki.

It has emerged he was involved in planning terrorist operations for the Islamist militant group al-Qaeda.

About 30 to 40 people met in the converted flat on the first floor of a building to hear the lecture.

This week members of Dudley Central Mosque and the Dudley Muslim Association condemned the meeting.

Spokesman Amjid Raza said: "We are disappointed to hear about this but we have never heard anything about this until now."

"This is the first time we have heard about this. We condemn this extremism and we continue to work closely with the whole community."

Date for town hall to reopen

A £55,000 scheme to carry out vital repairs on the ceiling of Dudley Town Hall has been completed and the venue is expected to reopen on April 22.

The hall, in St James's Road, has been forced to close for four months after loose plaster was discovered on the ceiling.

Alongside repairs to the ceiling, work has also taken place to reinforce the balcony ceiling.

Tea dances will kick off the new entertainment schedule. The hall will also host comedians Ken Dodd on June 20 and Milton Jones on October 2.

Other events include The Good Old Day of Variety, American Superslam Wrestling and a performance by the Soul Survivors.

Ofsted praise for primary school

INSPECTORS have praised Sacred Heart Primary School in Tipton, giving it the second highest rating. Pupils were performing well and Ofsted were impressed with the leadership of the headteacher Melanie Gee.

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Just rewards for the unsung heroes

UNSUNG heroes in Dudley who go the extra mile to help others in their community have been honoured.

More than 150 people packed into the Village Hotel, Castlegate, for the Mayor's Civic Awards event. The borough's first citizen Councillor Margaret Aston presented the accolades to individuals and groups.

The Friends of Priory Park and The Green picked up the Mayor's Award after receiving the most votes online. Runners-up were secretary of the Priory Community Association Sally Johnson, secretary of the Worcester and Sherwood Forester Regiment Association Gordon Willets and Raves Rescue, a charity with rescues abandoned animals.

James Stevens, frontman of band The Empty Can and voice of the Black Country anthem, was presented with the Cedric Hardwicke Award for art, sponsored by Stourbridge College.

Beryl Luckins received the runners-up award for her 40-year devotion to drama. Lila Redfern, who has served as a school governor for nearly 50 years received the Thomas Attwood award for education. Runner-up was Bev Hodt, a teacher at Ridgewood High School, in Stourbridge, for her work organising an annual fact-finding trip for pupils to The Gambia.

Halesowen's Mick Freer was presented with the William Shenstone Award for environment for his work in an ongoing project maintaining and pre-

serving the walled garden at the Leasowes in the town.

The runners-up award went to Don Davies, the driving force behind the Woodsetton Charitable Trust.

The Mike Holder award for business went to Steve Parker, chairman of the Federation of Small Businesses. Ian Caswell, who has run the Arcade Toy Shop, in Dudley, for nearly 40 years, was runner-up.

Jordanne Whiley, paralympian and wheelchair tennis star, won the Duncan Edwards award for sport, ahead of basketball coach Clive Allen.

The Frank Foley award for community spirit went to Jane Ahmed, who set up the Chatback group.

Dream come true as patient meets UB40

'IT has made me feel stronger, like there is something saying to just keep going.'

So says Nicola Moore, a 32-year-old mother-of-two who was told just weeks ago she has terminal cancer.

last week, after thousands of people rallied online to support her, Nicola, of Wordsley, ticked the main item off her bucket list – meeting her idol, UB40 singer Ali Campbell.

She said: "When that door opened I just froze. Everything was in slow motion.

"Ali has made me feel good in myself now and more like I can try and get on with my illness. He seems a strong person himself and he understands. I've had my wish come true now."

Two months ago Nicola, mother to 12-year-old Chloe and 19-month-old Shyann, was diagnosed with cervical cancer.

After a dose of radiation treatment, just five weeks ago she received the news her cancer was terminal. With the help of Compton Hospice's PR and marketing officer Grace Ruston, Nicola posted her wish to meet UB40 on Facebook last Wednesday afternoon.

By the time reggae legends Ali and Astro walked into her room 24 hours later, the post had been viewed by 2.5 million people, and had been shared on Facebook more than 48,000 times.

Requests

Back in Birmingham for just one day before heading to London to begin rehearsals for a national tour, the timing could not have been more perfect.

Ali said although they had had a few similar requests in the past, Nicola was 'a bit more special'.

"Wednesday night 500 people were interested, then 5,000, then 30,000, then 2.5 million on Thursday morning."

"I have had messages from Mississippi, New Zealand, Australia - 'Are you going to go and see this young lady?'

"Yeah man, we're on our way."

Astro added: "How can we not go?"

Meeting Nicola had been very humbling, he said. "At the end of the day these are the people who have supported us throughout our careers...these are hardcore fans who have stood by us through thick and thin."

"We were happy that we were in the neighbourhood and we made her wish come true...of all the people and bands in the world she chose us, I feel honoured."

Aware she was in for some sort of surprise,



Nicola Moore meets UB40's Ali Campbell and Astro at Compton Hospice

Nicola had no idea who was going to be visiting. She said: "I have had some poorly days this week but this has just changed it all. I'm so happy, just chuffed. I'm just shocked, I feel like glass."

Describing Ali as 'incredible', Nicola said she had been a fan of the band since she was a child and her mother would play their music.

She said: "He had the walk – that style, that cool walk coming towards me."

"I felt like something was pulling me, it felt like he's coming to me now like God was coming to hold my hand."

"He winked at me as well and gave me a kiss on the cheek and held my hand, I couldn't believe it."

Nicola sang a few lines of 'Rat in the Kitchen' for them, as they chatted about their childhoods and

compared tattoos. Ali and Astro pledged to dedicate last Friday's session on Radio 2's Chris Evans' show to Nicola, as well as a song at their Nottingham show tonight (Thursday) which she will be attending as a VIP guest.

Nicola's mother Susan Colman, 52, said it was wonderful seeing her daughter smile. "To see her happy again after what she has been through is tremendous," she said.

"We never thought it would go like this, just posting something on the internet."

Miss Ruston said: "When Nicola first told us about this she was in a lot of pain and she looked quite unwell."

"Seeing her now and showing her all those messages, she just looks so bright and so happy."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Patrols against off-road bikers

POLICE patrols are being increased around a Dudley nature reserve following complaints about off-road bikes.

Residents living near Fens Pool in Brierley Hill have reported the bikes being used during evenings and weekends. Members of the Brockmoor and Pensnett police team have pledged to tackle the issue and have increased patrols. They said: "As the lighter night return, so does the issue of off-road bikes."

Those causing a menace on the bikes face having them confiscated.

Driver in court over fatal crash

A MAN has appeared in court charged with causing death by dangerous driving.

Jamie Wharton, aged 29, was behind the wheel of a Nissan Skyline when it careered through a garden wall in St Peter's Road, Netherton, last June. Front seat passenger Timothy Pearson, 23, suffered fatal injuries.

At Dudley magistrates court, Wharton, of Birch Coppice, Quarry Bank, was released on unconditional bail to appear at Wolverhampton Crown Court on June 23 for a plea and case management hearing.

Burglary suspect held in custody

A MAN has charged with carrying out a series of burglaries at homes across Dudley borough.

Scott Pooler, aged 39, and of no fixed address, was arrested outside the Cousins store in the town centre, after the furniture shop reported a lamp had been stolen.

He was charged with seven counts of burglary and one theft, and at Dudley Magistrates Court, was remanded in custody ahead of an appearance at Wolverhampton Crown Court.

Letters in favour of supermarket scheme

MORE than 100 letters in support of a supermarket on the site of a landmark pub in Dudley have been lodged.

Aldi has lodged proposals to demolish The King Arthur, beside the Birmingham New Road, to make way for the store.

The supermarket says its plans for 1,000 sq ft store will create 40 jobs and have a 94-space car park.

Nearby residents have written to Dudley Council in support of the scheme.

Police probe stabbing

A STABBING victim was in a stable condition in hospital after being attacked in broad daylight in Coseley.

The 38-year-old man was stabbed twice in the car park at The Royal Hotel in Castle Street at 4.15pm on Saturday. Police said inquiries were ongoing.

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THE BEST OF PETER RHODES



ONE thing I know from a reliable source is that some charity shops suffer huge losses from shoplifting. Scum does not even begin to describe them.

MY recent item about the woman on Antiques Road-show who bought a necklace from a charity shop for £5 and had it valued at up to £6,000 brings much dark muttering. There is a persistent rumour that charity-shop workers get the pick of the goods. Is it true? Or is it just a tale put about by people who have never given the time and effort to work in such places?

WHILE the rest of the cast in The Ark have the usual Genesis beards and straggly hair, young Kenan (Nico Mirallegro) has an authentic 2015 boy-band haircut. And lo, in those days did Kenan, son of Noah, go forth unto the House of Salon and saith unto the barber therein: "Number four all over, mate, and tapered neck."



IT is a very rare thing for anyone to resign voluntarily from the House of Lords, the best club on London, but for whatever reasons, Lord Ashcroft has. His departure releases one bottom-space in that over-packed citadel of hot air where 800 peers pontificate. In a sane system there would be no more than a couple of hundred. Farewell, Lord Ashcroft. One down, 600 to go.

REMEMBER the shirt I bought on the internet which generated no fewer than six emails from the makers? Make that eight. I've had two sales pitches, including one offering me the chance to "stay wrinkle-free all day." Frankly, that would take more than a shirt.

A READER writes: "I have developed a way of dealing with people who say Jeremy Clarkson should not have been sacked. I call them a lazy **** and punch them in the mouth."

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

A NEW £5 million college campus has officially opened in the Black Country.

Stourbridge College has modernised its main campus at Hagley Road with a stylish new building created for a fresh generation of learners.

The site has centres of excellence for engineering, health and social care and early years.

Guests saw students hard at work in the new science and IT laboratories which are part of the revamped A-level suite. A range of events took place at the opening of the campus, which is part of Birmingham Metropolitan College.

Performing arts students celebrated Stourbridge College through the years and music students provided background entertainment. Margot James, who is defending her seat in Stourbridge, performed the official opening and unveiled a glass sculpture in the new reception area, created by artist, Allister Malcolm of Broadfield House Art Museum. The piece, called The Vision, is based around the iris of an eye.

Head of Stourbridge College Wendy Stevens said: "Today is the realisation of our ambition to create the very best in teaching and learning facilities in the Black Country. "Students and staff are absolutely thrilled to have moved into new classrooms with state of the art IT tech-

By Andrew Turton

nology and bespoke facilities for engineering, health and social care and early years.

"We now have a real presence in Stourbridge town centre with a fantastic landmark building which is providing a real draw for local students and employers.

"Our aim is to build on the legacy of the college and help more local people realise their dreams," said Miss James.

"It has been really exciting following its progress over the past year and it's an amazing investment for Stourbridge.

"Undoubtedly, the college boosts our local economy by ensuring young people and adults are equipped with the right skills to fill gaps needed by local employers, but I'm especially impressed with their commitment to ensuring people also have the right employability training to get into work."

"Students and staff are absolutely thrilled to have moved into new classrooms with state of the art IT tech-

PLenty of spring babies are ready to greet visitors to Birmingham Wildlife Conservation Park.

Babies spring up at city park



Proud parent — golden lion tamarin Pablo at the wildlife park

They include golden lion tamarin twins born to parents Cleo and Pablo and a yellow capuchin monkey born to parents Benji and Comico.

Pied tamarins, Freddie and Boudica, have also welcomed a new arrival. Head of Birmingham Wildlife Conservation Park, Les Basford, said: "Although the pied tamarin baby is the oldest of the bunch, pied tamarins are very nervous creatures and his tiny parents — each weighing in at about 600g — are both extremely protective so visitors are unlikely to catch a glimpse.

"However the other three babies are growing in both size and confidence and aren't fazed at all so I'm sure visitors will be able to see them."

The park is open from 10am until 5pm and can be found on Pershore Road, two miles south of the city centre. Under-3s free, £3 for those aged under 16. Adults £5.50.

Service to honour the memory of chairman

A SERVICE will celebrate the life of respected businessman Douglas Graham, chairman of the Claverley Group, parent company of the Express & Star and Shropshire Star.

Mr Graham died after a short illness, aged 85. He belonged to the Wolverhampton family company, one of the most successful in the newspaper and print industry. A service to celebrate his life will take place at St Peter's Collegiate Church in Wolverhampton on Monday, April 13, from 11.30am. In lieu of flowers, donations are asked to be made to Compton Hospice, Severn Hospice and Hope House.

Mr Graham succeeded his father, Malcolm Graham, as chairman of the Claverley Group in 1993 after a career in the business. A keen motor enthusiast, he was a life member of the British Racing Drivers' Club and a game shooting enthusiast. His wife Sara said: "I was jolly lucky to have been married to him for nearly 35 years."

Claverley CEO Phil Inman said: "Mr Graham was a major force in the success of our business. His career, which spanned more than half a century, saw the MNA and its sister companies achieve significant triumphs amid times of fierce competition and constant change."

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Action on yobs at shoppers' car park

A NEW crackdown on yobs causing a nuisance in a Stourbridge shopping centre car park is to take place.

Police have applied to use a Public Space Protection Plan (PSPO) to deal with anti-social behaviour plaguing the Ryemarket, which includes skateboarders and BMX riders getting in the way of motorists, sometimes skating dangerously down ramps. Walls have been daubed with graffiti.

The PSPO is a new power under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 which enables councils to deal with problems in public spaces by imposing conditions for the use of that area.

Staff and shoppers have complained about the problems in the car park. Now members of the Wollaston and Stourbridge town police team have pledged to tackle the issue.

Sergeant Andy Holder, who is leading the police team tackling the problem, said: "Due to reports from shoppers and shop staff at the Ryemarket shopping centre of youths acting in an anti-social manner in the multi-storey car park it has been decided to include this as an issue for the team to address."

"We are in the process of potentially applying for a PSPO. We will continue with regular patrols in the area at various times."

Lord Cobham gets go-ahead for £2.5m visitor centre

A £2.5 million visitor centre will be built at Hagley Hall and Park later this year as part of the latest stage of works to reopen the site to the public.

Lord Cobham, who owns the 350-acre estate, says work could start by the summer to create the centre off the A456. Councillors on Bromsgrove District Council have granted planning permission.

Some campaigners including members of the Halesowen Abbey Trust and Hagley Parish Council had objected. Their concerns include fears over the impact on Green Belt land, extra traffic on the busy route and subsequent pollution risks.

The scheme was approved subject to an agreement that proposed rangers' accommodation is for the sole use of estate employees.

Lord Cobham, Christopher Lyttleton, says he is pleased that progress can now be made with the aim of reopening the park – which has been closed for more than three decades – in 2016.

He hopes income from up to 100,000 visitors a year will provide sustainable revenue aimed at helping pay vast costs associated with maintaining the 18th century hall and park. "It is good that we are now at the stage when work can start later on this year," he said.

"We are in the process of potentially applying for a PSPO. We will continue with regular patrols in the area at various times."

By Andrew Turton

The visitor centre would be the main entrance and will be built on fields off the A456 opposite the Badgers Sett pub.

New link roads will be built to access the site on the Stourbridge-bound side of the dual carriageway. Outline plans seek to create a car park for up to 180 vehicles including coaches.

The centre will incorporate education and history exhibitions showcasing Hagley Hall and Park through the decades including study areas for visiting school children. There will also be a restaurant, gift shop and outdoor seating area alongside a children's play area.

Over recent months the ornate casades, waterfalls and pools have been cleared and rebuilt. Pathways which once led walkers on picturesque routes through the park have also been re-marked and relaid.

106? I don't feel it, says Nell at party



Nell Cook celebrates with Jan Hollyfield, Margaret Aston and Dorothy Clarke MBE

SHE has lived during the reigns of five monarchs and now Nell Cook is celebrating turning a remarkable 106 years of age.

The former factory worker was born in Birmingham but has lived in Halesowen for the past 25 years. She celebrated the milestone in style with a birthday bash with her friends at the Halesowen Over-50s Group, where Miss Cook has been a member since the 1990s.

More than 30 members turned out to the Zion Christian Centre in Little Cornbow for the party. Mayor of Dudley Councillor Margaret Aston also made an appearance pass on her good wishes.

"I definitely do not feel my age," said Miss Cook. "I never married and that's the way I like it."

Miss Cook had five brothers and sisters, Edith, Amelia, Ethel, Fred and Arthur, but is the last surviving sibling. Dorothy Clarke MBE, chairwoman of the Halesowen Over-50s Group, said: "She is still so well in herself and so sharp, it is incredible."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Devolved powers for city region

BIRMINGHAM is to become the next city to get devolved powers, it has been claimed, in a move that would likely mean councils in the Black Country being granted greater responsibilities too.

Conservative Party grandee Lord Heseltine said it had been agreed by the Government. The move, which has already been made in Greater Manchester, would likely mean councils in the Black Country also being given greater freedom over business rates, transport, planning and health. Former deputy prime minister Lord Heseltine said: "Birmingham is next, that's been agreed."

Council bosses have already agreed to create a combined authority in the region.

Thousands drawn by glass festival

THE International Festival of Glass will return to Stourbridge on May 28.

Thousands of visitors from across the globe will descend on the town for the four-day event.

The festival will also host the British Glass Biennale which features work from 77 artists who have been selected for the prestigious award.

The artists will travel from countries including Costa Rica, South Korea, Israel, Sweden, Germany and Japan.

There will also entries from those living and working in Stourbridge's Glass Quarter.

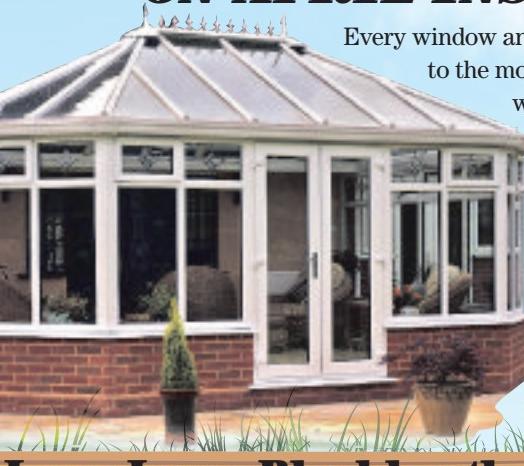
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Computer ban is a great idea but those names are just a no-no

THE terms 'grounded' and 'balanced' are not terms ones would normally associate with Hollywood couples, but Helen McCrory and Damien Lewis deserve at least two cheers for their strict rules on bringing up their two children.

Concerned about the way a growing number of children seem to live their life through the internet, Peaky Blinders star McCrory has said that her son, aged eight, and daughter nine, are banned from using the computer on school nights, and are allowed only limited access at weekends.

Instead, the couple are encouraging them to read books, including a thesaurus to help them expand their word power.

And quite right too. There is no reason whatsoever why children aged eight or nine should be spending their time glued to computers. At that age they should be discovering real life, warts and all, not studying some virtual world through an electronic medium. They should be playing football, cricket or netball with their friends, building dens, painting or baking cakes, not locked in their bedrooms with only a screen for company.

One only has to look around us to see how the computer age has produced a generation of isolated, introverted, individuals who fear any social interaction that does not come at the click of a mouse or the press of a touch-screen. Being a teenager is difficult enough, without spending hours on end tapping away at a computer. There will be plenty of time for that when they grow up.

And while the political classes are getting all worked up about children being exposed to online pornography, has no one ever stopped to consider that this would be much less of a problem if we did not encourage children to spend so much time on computers?

However, while McCrory and Lewis deserve credit for ensuring their children will learn about real life as well as virtual reality, I do wonder whether they really helped the cause by saddling them with the monikers Manon and Gulliver.

There's just this nagging suspicion that they would find it easier to relate to their peers if they were called Dave and Julie.

□□□□□

MARKETING, the art of using lengthy and plentiful words to say very little. Take this beauty from a well known Australian brewing corporation: "Badler is Foster's Lager cut with cloudy lemon. Fruity and sharp, it has a distinctive citrus taste, making it a refreshing lager, perfect to enjoy when you're kicking back and want to take things that little bit easier."

Or shandy, as it used to be called in the old days.



Dave with guide Rosemary Rhodes and the Black Country flags



A device to suck out poison if bitten by a snake



Participants are seen taking on one of the desert's huge sand dunes

Dave on desert trail to fly flag for region

ANDREW TURTON caught up with Blind Dave Heeley before he started on another massive challenge in the Sahara

BLACK COUNTRY charity champ Dave Heeley is blazing a trail once more to inspire a generation, as he nears to the end of a gruelling 160-mile run through the Sahara Desert.

Whether it is climbing soaring 590ft high sand dunes, battling sweltering 120F temperatures or tucking into a packet of Black Country pork scratchings to keep his strength up, Dave is once again a superb ambassador for the region.

With his last minute packing –before flying out to Morocco – including his trusty Black Country Flag, Dave has completed weeks of tough training in preparation for the six-day event.

The father-of-three, who is a devoted Baggies fan, has already helped raise almost £20,000 for West Brom's charity The Albion Foundation which supports community projects including disability sport.

The foundation established the Tri-Challenge to bring in vital funds through endurance feats including a charity bike ride and a walk between schools in Sandwell.

And now the final leg of this awe-inspiring challenge will take Dave, aged 57, and his two guides Tony Ellis and Rosemary Rhodes to the desert.

He is being cheered on by his family including wife Deb, who he has been married to for 10 years, and daughters Grace, 24, Georgie-Lee, 13, and 11-year-old Dannie.

Dave is carrying a locket with him to contain silver impressions of their fingerprints to help remind him of them more than 1,400 miles away.

After touching down in north Africa, Dave took a five-hour coach journey to the edge of the Sahara.

Around 1,000 competitors from all around



Some of the provisions and equipment runner Blind Dave has taken with him for his trek

Facing the facts of the Sahara

SCORCHING temperatures in the Sahara during the high season can reach up to 120F (49C).

During the Marathon Des Sables a minimum daily intake of 2,000 calories is recommended. Most participants take between 3,000 to 4,000 to compensate for daily losses.

There are snakes in Morocco but competitors rarely glimpse them. Instead they may encounter scorpions and mosquitoes.

Sun hats with neck covers are essential as well as Factor 50 sun block.

Athletes are told to eat a breakfast each day

and eat high-energy snacks every 20 to 30 minutes during the race.

At least four litres of water are available to drink every day with checkpoints set up to replenish thirsty athletes.

People carry up to 15kgs of kit including their tent, cooking equipment, food and water during the day.

Each days stage starts from 8am and runners are forced to cope with the high temperatures in the midday sun.

Competitors are only told their route on the first day. One stage will be 50 miles-long.

"I'll have my Black Country flag with me and hopefully I'm representing us lot."

"Everyone has been fantastic with their support. I can't thank them enough. Especially my family, they have been amazing."

Ahead of the challenge Dave had acclimated to the harsh conditions by training in a humidity chamber at the University of Bir-

mingham. Athletes sleep under tents in the desert and face different terrain and conditions every day – including huge sand dunes, dried up river beds and rocky routes.

Each athlete is given a GPS tracker so that the organisers can monitor the competitors can make their way through the vast desert.

Dave has had a full medical and a electrocardiogram and was told he could encounter heatstroke, dehydration and bites from creatures like scorpions.

His kit bag weighs around 9kgs and carries all his essentials. The only supplies they are given is four litres of fresh water each day.

The only items he will eat each day consists of dried food like noodles, fruit and even cottage pie and chilli con carne.

The team have to take in a minimum of 2,000 calories a day and athletes are instructed to use tablets to replace essential nutrients and electrolytes.

But Dave added: "I'm also taking a Pepperami and some pork scratchings too. They will help with replacing salts and they are a treat too to keep me going."

Dave was born with the hereditary disease of the eye of Retinitis Pigmentosa which was diagnosed at the age of 10. The condition brought the gradual deterioration of his sight. "At the time I was diagnosed it didn't affect me as maybe I didn't really understand it. From 16 my sight just nosedived. But it had gone by my 20s."

"Because you get so busy and you learn to cope. It still staggers me that just a few years ago I could see. Now I can see millions and millions of lights in front of me, then dull lights then almost a honeycomb and it is bright."

"But it was and is still a frustration. You never get used to being blind but you learn to accept the fact that barring a miracle there are no worries in the world that will bring it back."

Dave said: "I've been told the kids look up to me and that's nice. If they can think 'if that old codger can do it, what can we do'. I want them to look it that way. If that spurs them on then fantastic."

To donate visit www.justgiving.com/blind-davems or go to www.thealbionfoundation.co.uk website.

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Trains not trees would help us all

NETWORK Rail, the West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority, Centra and DfT should no longer fund the re-opening of rural lines but get to work in re-introduction of stations and tracks that literally run alongside or near to bumper-to-bumper commuter traffic in our own densely populated urban conurbation.

Stations are urgently needed at Waterfront and Merry Hill, Dudley Castle Hill, Wednesbury on the scrub and woodland, 21km Black Country rail line. Trains not trees would be more of a help to us all.

This is the only, unused, north-south, inter-city line between congested New Street Station and the Hereford-Shrewsbury Line between London and Scotland. It goes through the heart of three densely populated Black Country boroughs with a population of about a million.

Many years ago, there was a PTA/Centra plan to put Midland Metro light rail trams on this freight line but not even this has been achieved.

T WELLER
Halesowen

What's the purpose of debates?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Dudley Chronicle,
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Intrigued at reaction to scooter comments

WHEN I wrote about mobility scooters they were generalised comments not an attack on any specific user.

I am not sure why but D Robinson, who is 83 and cannot walk more than 20/30 yards before losing balance, seems to have taken it as a personal affront.

Quite why my so-called petty comments should niggle him intrigues me.

The point I was trying to make was not so much about who should use mobility scooters or not, but how they can be seen to be used for purposes for which they are not intended, and in doing so they can present a hazard.

By his own admission D Robinson's scooter can only travel up to 6kph, so he im-

plies that I exaggerate when I say people have whizzed past me pretty quickly.

In my book six kph is a pretty brisk walking pace and in towns with its congested or restricted pavements, and at that speed, there is a chance of serious injury, especially concerning the elderly and infirm.

For me, totally deaf and with a balance problem, changing direction on a pavement and with a scooter travelling at that speed behind me, it could be a quick route to A&E. This to me makes it difficult to accept at face value the assertion that most, if not all, motor scooter owners have third party insurance.

J B WALDRON
Stourbridge

You can see doctor – 18 days later

AS the General Election looms, David Cameron has aspirations for an NHS working policy of seven days a week. Is he living in cloud cuckoo land or just having a laugh?

I very rarely have made a visit to the doctors but on Monday, March 30, I had the need to make an appointment at the practice I use which is Great Bridge Partnerships for Health.

Having no joy trying to phone and book an appointment I had to go and see the receptionist. I was astonished when she told me that I could see a doctor on Friday, April 17, which was 18, yes 18 days later. I left and went to see a local pharmacist about my problem.

So please Mr Cameron get to core issues like this before trying to preach for better things.

T MILLS
Dudley

Reason why we need a zoo

REPLYING to my letter calling for the demolition of Dudley Hippodrome, M Laws asks "Why do we need a zoo?" The answer of course is that, in 2014 it was visited by 290,000 people.

In his letter he does acknowledge what an eyesore and anachronism it is by suggesting a way of disguising it.

Another correspondent gave their reason for preservation the fact that they had performed there.

B OSBORNE
Dudley

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New figures for ethnic cop drive

HOPES that the appointment of 450 new constables to West Midlands Police would see more black and minority ethnic recruits have met with limited success.

The fresh intake is being staggered and the first two groups totalling 162 officers include 13 described as Asian, two listed as black and seven recorded as being of mixed race, figures reveal.

There have been a total of 138 white recruits.

The force was specifically aiming to use the recruitment drive — the first in more than five years for the cash-strapped force — to increase the number of black and minority ethnic officers, as well as younger recruits, to better reflect the communities it serves.

Easter getaway flights on the up

MORE than 415,000 people are expected to jet off from Birmingham Airport during the two-week Easter break — an increase of almost nine per cent on last year.

The most popular destinations so far have included Spain and Scotland. Those proving a big hit for short city breaks over the first weekend are Amsterdam, Paris and Madrid.

Spokesman David Lavender said: "Approximately 418,000 people will pass through Birmingham Airport over the two-week holiday period, representing an 8.8 per cent increase compared to Easter last year."

Moomins are looming with Finnish author exhibition

Report by Heather Large

HER books on The Moomins have sold in their millions and been translated into more than 40 languages around the globe.

And the life of Finnish author Tove Jansson and her most loved creation is the subject of a new exhibition in Sandwell.

It will celebrate the 100th anniversary of her birth as well as her characters. The display at Wednesbury Museum and Art Gallery has original unseen photographs and material relating to the life and work of Jansson, who grew up in Helsinki, along with illustrated books and early first editions.

Her enchanting world of The Moomins included Moomintroll, Moominmamma and Moominpappa - little white trolls who live in Moominvalley, with other fantastical creatures such as the Hattifatteners, Mymbles and Whompers.

To run alongside the exhibition there will also be vintage editions of classic children's books and personal favourite books loaned by the community on display.

Jansson's first of nine Moomin books — The Moomins and the Great Flood, which she wrote and illustrated — was published in 1945. She went on to produce a comic strip for London's Evening News newspaper in 1954 and it became



Tove Jansson seen with some Moomins in 1992

came so popular that within two years 120 newspapers in more than 20 countries around the world were running it.

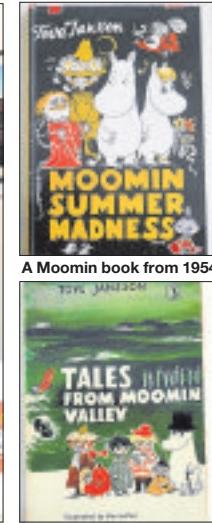
Jansson was born in Helsinki to a family of artists and her writing career was inspired by the beauty found in her home country. The exhibition is being brought to the

Black Country by the Institute for Contemporary Art and curated by the Finnish Institute.

It's part of a number of celebrations taking place to mark the 100th anniversary of Jansson's birth, which have included a new film Moomins on the Riviera due to be screened later this year.



Associate curator Sumitra Upham, at Wednesbury Museum



A 1954 Penguin book

A 1962 Penguin book

Museum services manager Jane Hanney said: "Tove Jansson, an accomplished Finnish author and artist, had a life every bit as fascinating as her famous creations, The Moomins. The display draws an intimate portrait of the artist's life on her private island in the archipelago of Finland, where

she regularly spent the summer months and at her studio in Helsinki."

The exhibition in Wednesbury is called Tove Jansson: Tales from the Nordic Archipelago and will be on display until June 27. For opening times visit www.sandwell.gov.uk/museumevents

Boss puts up £2,000 reward as store hit

THE owner of a mobile phone shop who lost thousands of pounds worth of stock following a break-in has said he will offer a reward to anyone with information that leads to the crooks being convicted.

Ali Mahmood said he was willing to give £2,000 to anyone who helps catch those responsible. His shop Talk n Talk in Great Bridge was ransacked by thieves who struck during the night. They broke in by smashing a hole in the roof.

Batteries and LCD screens for iPhones and smartphones were stolen as well as top-of-the-range speakers and headphones during the raid which happened overnight between Monday, February 27 and Tuesday, February 28.

Mr Mahmood said: "My manager came in on Tuesday morning to find the place ransacked."

The 40-year-old businessman said he was hopeful the offer of a reward will encourage people to come forward. He said: "The thieves will be trying to sell it on. It's high-quality stock."

Mr Mahmood said the crooks who had raided his business were 'low-lives'. On top of huge losses caused by the stolen stock, Mr Mahmood had the added blow of having to foot the bill for the roof repairs.

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Terrorists' Dudley penpal is jailed for nine months

THE son of a former mosque leader has been jailed for nine months after being in regular correspondence with some of the world's most feared and violent terrorists.

Unemployed Usman Choudhary also had an image of a man holding up a decapitated head on his mobile phone and de-faced images of the Queen.

Detectives found more than 500 letters sent to and written by the 34-year-old when they raided his home in the Black Country.

The list read like a Who's Who of murderers and hard-line clerics held behind bars in the UK and US, including the killers of Lee Rigby and radical Muslim cleric Abu Hamza.

Choudhary — whose father, Ghulam is the ex-chairman of Dudley Central Mosque — had carefully filed and indexed all the correspondence, along with details of £14,000 of cash gifts sent by him to some of the inmates. It is unclear where the money came from.

Obsession

Miss Alison Morgan, prosecuting, told Kingston-upon-Thames Crown Court that Choudhary from Terry Street, Kates Hill, had an 'obsession' with violent jihad.

"This led to his association with those convicted of very serious terrorist offences," she said. "He had a prolific correspondence with prisoners."

"Hundreds of letters and copies were discovered at his home address in December 2013 showing the extent of the correspondence."

"It was either with those convicted of terrorist offences or individuals recently converted to Islam and introduced to Choudhary by others."

"He had close contact with those



Unemployed Usman Choudhary corresponded with notorious terrorists convicted of the most serious terrorist offences such as the planned bombing of trans-Atlantic airliners and the murderers of Lee Rigby.

"They felt confident in expressing their extreme anti-western views to Mr Choudhary. He was offering services and support, sending money, clothes and reading material."

Choudhary had an image of a beheaded man on his mobile phone, the court was told.

There was also footage praising Osama Bin Laden and Choudhary had de-faced the Queen's head and the crown displayed on stamps on the letters.

There were 75 prisoners on the list

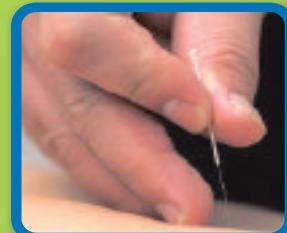


Correspondent — hate preacher Abu Hamza was jailed in New York of correspondents, 61 of whom were serving time for terrorist offences. They included Michael Abedolajo, given a whole life term for murdering soldier Lee Rigby; infamous preacher Abu Hamza, recently found guilty of supporting terrorism by a court in New York; and another 'penpal' was Roshonara Choudhry — no relation — jailed for life after stabbing Labour MP Stephen Timms.

Mr Daniel Friedman, defending, described the case as being 'at the least end of the spectrum of offending'. Choudhary admitted disseminating a terrorist publication. He denied two more serious terrorist offences and the judge acquitted him on both of these.

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Canvassing – from bins to stilettos . . .

DANIEL WAINWRIGHT
Political Editor

MICHAEL Gove picked up the blown-over brown wheelie bin and put it neatly back where it belonged.

The former Education Secretary, now Tory Chief Whip, was doing a little bit of a good deed while out canvassing in Wolverhampton.

Limes Road in Tettenhall had turned into some sort of savage ecosystem. Bright, glorious sunshine one minute, rain lashing down the next and topped off with gusts of wind threatening to drag the leaflets from his hands before he could stuff them through anyone's letterbox.

Wolverhampton South West's Conservatives called in the big guns for the first week of the General Election campaign. And with good reason. Paul Uppal's majority is just 691 votes.

Helicopter

The following day we would get a visit from both the Prime Minister and the Chancellor to Banks's Brewery, where the Marston's boss Ralph Findlay had just backed them in a letter to the Daily Telegraph.

They would arrive by helicopter and get picked up in a Jaguar before being driven to their appointment in style.

But on the street in Tettenhall the Chief Whip was putting in the leg work. Most of the knocks on the door went unanswered.

Perhaps this was a good sign for the Tories. Maybe it was evidence that



Addressing supporters – Eddie Izzard complete with nail varnish and heels

their long-term economic plan was working and that everyone was out at a job. One man announced he was going to vote for the Scottish National Party. To be honest, they're probably going to be the biggest winners after the vote on May 7 anyway so it wasn't a bad shout.

A woman came out of her house and gave Mr Gove what for about the pressure that headteachers are under. She was especially concerned about the targets they have to meet.

The former education secretary listened and the woman apologised for having a 'whinge'. Mr Gove said she was doing no such thing and offered to raise her concerns with the Prime Minister. After all, education is no longer his brief. It's now in the hands of Nicky Morgan.

Something did occur to me that

should probably have occurred to the Conservatives too. If the Tories cannot win in lovely, leafy Tettenhall, then they are never going to have a majority government again.

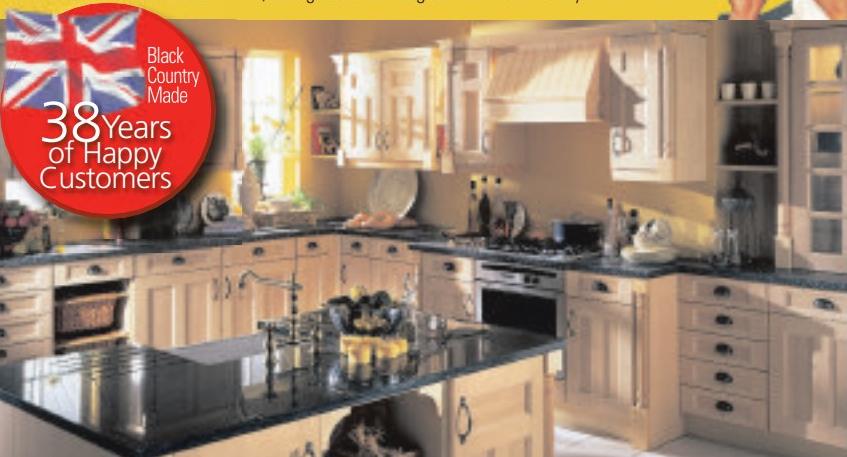
Eddie Izzard brought a bit of star quality to Labour's election campaign in the key marginal seat of Halesowen and Rowley Regis. The comedian visited in support of candidate Stephanie Peacock.

He's been all over the West Midlands and beyond backing Labour.

It's certainly useful for any political party to have a star backer. But will anyone who met Eddie Izzard remember he was there to tell them to vote Labour? Or will they just tell their friends they spent part of the day with a comedian? And how does he manage to canvass in those heels?

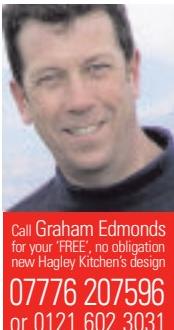
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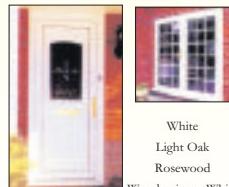
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Mr Blue plaque as ELO star is commemorated

FANS joined family and friends of Electric Light Orchestra star Kelly Groucutt at the unveiling of a commemorative blue plaque outside the house where he was born and brought up.

Dudley Mayor Councillor Margaret Aston performed the honours and then spoke of the love and respect for the bass player, vocalist and father-of-four who died from a heart attack in 2009.

A quarter peal of bells rang out from nearby Christ Church, where he was christened, for 45 minutes. The occasion drew such a large crowd that Gough Road, Coseley had to be closed in both directions.

Kelly's sister Mrs Pamela Whale, aged 74, from Upper Gornall said: "It is a magic moment to see his work and music recognised in this way by so many people."

Spilling

Brother John, 72, added: "He was known throughout the world but never forgot where his roots were."

Another brother Tony, aged 75, looked at the crowd spilling across the street and recalled with a smile: "This has meant everything to us."

"His first band used to rehearse in the cellar of the house and made so much noise the ground shook. I used to warn him that one day they would have to close the road because of him and now they have."

Members of Kelly's first band, Ricky Burns and the Vibras - named after a guitar - were also at the ceremony. Jimmy Groucutt, now 72, and living in Bilston, but not related, said: "We started playing when he was 15 and we were together for two and half years. Fame never changed him."



At the unveiling are ex-band members from Ricky Burns and the Vibras



Mayor of Dudley Margaret Aston with Groucutt family members for the ceremony

Councillor Aston said: "He was a very much loved son of Dudley and the respect in which he is held is illustrated by the size of the turn out."

Fans Thomas Hoyer aged 56 and his 53-year-old wife Conny flew in from their home in Potsdam in Germany to be at the unveiling ceremony, and ex-

plained: "We loved his music. He was a great musician and a lovely man."

Kelly, who was born Michael William Groucutt, lived in Coseley from 1945 to 1967.

The house is now owned by Mr Jake Hill and his wife Coleen who have lived there since 1994.

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New nature group head for the hills

A NEW nature group is hoping to attract more members amongst to join its ranks.

Friends of Rowley Hills was recently set up with the aim of protecting and promoting the nature reserve in Rowley Regis.

It was started in December and currently has nine committee members. The group carry out work with The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country on the reserve.

Joe Peacock, Communications Officer at The Wildlife Trust, said: "It's great there is a new nature group. They will help to raise awareness of the nature reserve and help ensure it has a bright future."

The Rowley Hills include Turner's Hill, Bury Hill, Portway Hill and Darby's Hill. For more information visit friendsofrowleyhills.org website.

Car topples in collision

A CAR ended up on its side after colliding with an electrical box and railings in the Black Country.

Firefighters were called to Four Winds Road, between Dudley and Rowley Regis, at around 7pm on Saturday.

The driver had left the scene by the time crews arrived and no-one was injured.

It was one of a number of smash-ups in the region over the bank holiday weekend.

FOCUS ON BLACKHEATH AND ROWLEY REGIS

Rotary club seeking more recruits and causes in area

By Jamie Brassington

A ROTARY club is planning to branch out further into the communities of Rowley Regis and Blackheath with their work helping good causes.

Halesowen is currently the main patch that Halesowen and Rowley Regis Rotary Club cover but secretary Barry Wheeler is hoping to see that expanded in the near future.

Rotary clubs are an international network of men and women who volunteer to help lives of communities where they live.

Mr Wheeler, aged 77, said: "We are hoping to branch out further into the towns. We cover those areas but Halesowen is our main patch.

"We want to reach all members through our community work. Some of the children we have helped have come from real poor backgrounds, which was a shock to us.

"Currently we are also after new recruits with fresh ideas on how we can help communities. I welcome anyone with new ideas to get touch with us."

The club is currently organising the Black Country Run that will take place in Halesowen this year, which raised over £22,000 for charity in 2014.

Members also haul a sleigh around the area for Father Christmas in the run up to Christmas to create a festive presence.

The club has also sponsored members of Halesowen scouts to fly to Japan this year as part of world scouts jamboree event, which Halesowen hosted in 2014.

For more information about the club visit halesowenrowleyregisrotary.org.



Keep Dancing for Acorns judges Jemma Bird, Tom Ross, Genelle Aldred and Richard Wilford

Celebrity panel judge Acorns dance contest

DANCERS put their best feet forward to raise vital funds for a charity that cares for children with life limiting or life threatening conditions.

The Keep Dancing for Acorns event, which raised £6,000 for Acorns Children's Hospice, saw dancers of all styles and abilities taking to the floor.

Mel Williams, 42, from Rowley Regis, whose five-year-old son Mason receives respite care at Acorns, took to the floor with her daughter Sadie for a 1940s inspired routine. She said: "We both had a lot of fun and it's some way of giving Acorns back for the wonderful job they do. The charity relies on fundraising through events like this."

Presenter Joanne Malin hosted the fundraiser at the Great Hall at the University of Birmingham. A celebrity judging panel made up of former Apprentice candidate Jemma Bird, TV presenter Genelle Aldred, sports commentator Tom Ross and BBC WM's Richard Wilford chose the eventual winner — 12-year-old Poppy Briarty from Birmingham.

Appeal is made after rider hurt

RESIDENTS have described how they heard a "terrific bang" after a motorcyclist was injured in an accident involving a taxi.

People in Springfield Lane, Rowley Regis, were woken at 5am on Saturday by the sound of a car revving its engine then a loud bang. This was followed by the anguished cry of the motorcyclist after his bike crashed into a parked Toyota Yaris, breaking the rider's ankle.

However, the driver of the silver cab failed to stop following the collision and is now being sought by police.

Diana Mannino, 58, who owns the Yaris, said she was awoken by the noise of the crash. She said: "It was a terrific bang."

Police are appealing for anyone with information in relation to the taxi driver to call Sandwell police on 101.

Rock and ska gigs at pub

MUSIC fans are in for a treat with a series of gigs being held at a Blackheath pub.

First to take to the stage will be a tribute to rocker Meatloaf at the Knight's Quest.

Meatloaf, also known as Craig Halford, will perform the hits at the pub, in High Street, tomorrow (Friday). Admission is £4.

There will be a performance by ska band AKA Ska Face at the venue on Saturday. Admission is £3.

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The Prodigy are back to spit fire

ALBUM REVIEWS

By Leon Burakowski

OPENING with the menacing title track, yells of 'get down' fused with a cacophony of video game noise and pounding beats — The Prodigy are back and plan to take no prisoners with *The Day Is My Enemy*, on their *Take Me To The Hospital* label.

The electro-dance punks are straight into Firestarter territory as Keith Flint snarls and spits his Larndarn accented lyrics on Nasty before unleashing the exhilarating drum 'n' bass of Rebel Radio. Sleaford Mods guest on Ibiza (or I-beef-ya) in a whirl of expletives and tracks with titles like Destroy, Rhythm Bomb, Rok-Weiler, Get Your Fight On and Wall Of Death are about a subtle as a drunken night out with Danny Dyer. Best of all is Wild Frontier, a Super Mario smackdown of chants, electronics and crashing beats.

Expect The Prodigy's sold out show at Birmingham O2 Academy on May 7 to be an intense high-energy experience.

Paul Simon is without doubt one of the finest songwriters of the past 50 years and **The Ultimate Collection:** Paul Simon lives up to its title with a 19-track selection of greatest hits.

This value-for-money Sony compilation mixes up the music from three distinct periods of his career. There is his 1960s collaboration with singer Art Garfunkel on such classics as Bridge Over Troubled Water, The Boxer, Mrs Robinson, The Sound of Silence and The Only Living Boy In New York. Then there his solo career with his 1970s hits Cecilia, Me & Julio Down by the School Yard, Slip Slidin' Away and the reggae-flavoured Mother & Child Reunion.



The Prodigy — about as subtle as a drunken night out with Danny Dyer

Then his groundbreaking collaborations with South African and Brazilian musicians that produced the hits You Can Call Me Al, GraceLand, Diamonds On The Soles Of Her Shoes, The Obvious Child and The Boy In The Bubble.

Paul Simon is on tour for a series of collaborative concerts with Sting including the Genting Arena at the NEC Birmingham on Sunday. Young Liverpudian band **Circa Waves** deliver short sharp blasts of dynamic indie pop, melodic and muscular with guitars that jangle and chime on their debut **Young Chasers**, on the Virgin EMi label. Imagine The Strokes but with a Mersey twang and a big smile.

Young Chasers is a joyous debut from one of the hardest gigging outfits on the circuit with lots of summer-ready anthems, such as T-shirt Weather, My Love, Young Chasers, Stuck In My Teeth and Best Years.

Circa Waves play The Library venue at The Institute in Digbeth on Tuesday.

Soulful, sad songs from a young singer-songwriter from London fill **Elsewhere**, the debut by 22-year-old Denial Moore.

Ghostpoet raps/recites over atmospheric grooves created from beats, fuzzy guitar and keyboard flourishes on his third album **Shedding Skin** (via Play It Again Sam). His unique vocal style is somewhere between Lou Reed, Mark E Smith and Gil Scott-Heron. There is a simmering tension that threatens to boil over on Better Not Butter.

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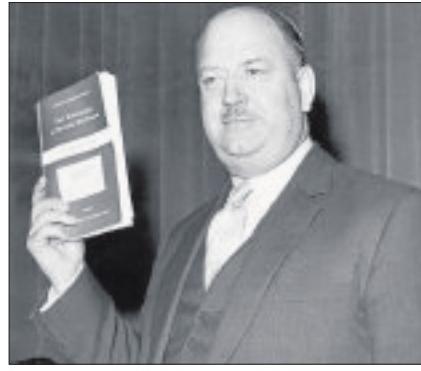
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These stalwarts of the Severn Valley Railway, seen in July 1986, could remember the day 21 years earlier when the momentous decision was made to start running steam trains again



Between the two reports on railway cutbacks, the West Midlands was hit as hard as anywhere



Dr Beeching had been tasked with making savings and the axing of several lines made him unpopular with rail enthusiasts

Why cutbacks put Dr Beeching on the wrong track with the rail enthusiasts

DR Richard Beeching has a bad reputation among rail enthusiasts. His name has become a dirty word.

On the back of his 1963 report 'The Reshaping of British Railways', more commonly known as the Beeching report, the government ripped up around a third of the national's rail tracks.

It was a move which devastated the network, costing 67,000 people their jobs and closing 2,363 railway stations in the process. But much less widely known is Beeching's second report, which marks its 50th anniversary in 2015. Just don't expect to see rail enthusiasts celebrating.

Entitled 'The Development of the Major Railway Trunk Routes' the report cemented much of what had been achieved by the earlier publication and further concentrated future plans for the network around a handful of main lines.

Between the two reports, the West Midlands was hit as hard as anywhere.

Dr Beeching had been tasked with making savings. Big savings.

British Rail was losing £140 million a year

MEMORY LANE

By Rob Cox

when he took over as chairman of the British Transport Commission in 1961.

His strategy was to implement wholesale route closures in an attempt to concentrate resources on the core routes and close down those sections which were losing money.

Inevitable

So in the West Midlands, some of the closures were inevitable. It emerged from Dr Beeching's studies that the Windmill End station, just outside Dudley, had been used by just one passenger a day, and it was surely little wonder that the town's three-mile Bumble Hole line was to close. But Beeching did not stop there.

While most people expected that some of the smaller towns would lose their rail links, he proposed the closure of all passenger services to Dudley and Walsall.

Dudley was one of the biggest communities in the country to be hit when its station at the bottom of Castle Hill was closed in July 1964.

Walsall station managed to avoid the full force of the axe, but had its services drastically reduced with just one line being retained to Birmingham New Street. Cannock, Aldridge and Wednesbury would also lose their stations, along with Darlaston, West Bromwich and Great Bridge.

Across the country 4,500 miles of railway tracks were put out of use. In their place motorways were being built at a rapid rate and the car was seen as the future.

No longer would rural areas have immediate access to the rail network. In many places replacement bus services were established, but few stood the test of time.

It is often argued Dr Beeching took a narrow-minded view of how money was generated on the rail network.

David Williams, editor of the Severn Valley Railway News, explains: "His remit was to reduce the deficit that the railways had at that time," he said. "It has been said since that what

he did was to cut off the bits around the core of the network.

"The trouble was that those fed into the main system. What Beeching didn't take into account was just that."

"He had got a scientific background and not a background in the railways. He considered the lines and stations independently not the cumulative affect his measures would have. His view was a very narrow one."

The second Beeching report concentrated on stimulating traffic on the core routes. Rather than branch line closures it set out which sections of the main line would be developed, and which would not.

Dr Beeching felt the "bloated" network was a legacy from the private foundations of the railways that was no longer cost-effective.

His conclusion was that of 7,500 miles of 'trunk' railway only 3,000 miles "should be selected for future development" and invested in.

It resulted in traffic being routed along nine lines.

Dr Beeching estimated it would save between £50-£100m.

Among the stations closed under the Beeching axe

Hammerwich
Brownhills
Pelsall

Wednesbury Town
Great Bridge North
Dudley Port Low Level
Dudley

Windmill End
Baptist End

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Journey north into the scenic highways of up-state New York stopping at the large Yankee Candle flagship store in Deerfield en route.

Enjoy a full-day's tour through the stunning scenery of New England and soak up the beauty of the forested hills and picture-book villages and towns like Woodstock. Travel through the spectacular Quechee Gorge and along the Kancamagus Highway taking in the Fall foliage displays, before visiting the resort town of North Conway.

Take time out to rest and relax in the Maine village of Bethel or join an optional excursion to Mount Washington, which includes a trip on the historic Cog Railway to the summit of New England's highest peak, in the White Mountains region.

Boston is America's most European city overflowing with historical sights, pretty parks and an attractive waterfront area. There's also colourful Quincy Market with its bars, restaurants and speciality stalls. A guided city tour and Whale Watch Cruise are also offered here (both optional).

And finally head via the Pilgrim city of Plymouth and fashionable Newport, Rhode Island, on the return to New York's JFK airport before the flight home.

INFO

- Return flights
- Seven nights room-only hotel accommodation
- Full day Foliage Tour
- Visit to the Yankee Candle Factory
- Visit to North Conway
- Free time in Bethel
- Services of a tour manager
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Organised by Newmarket Holidays (ABTA V7812, ATOL 2325)

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of the
Week

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Wimbledon Championships 2015

Two days departing July 11 and 12

PRICE FROM £155

- Return coach travel
- Overnight bed and breakfast accommodation at a hotel in the Greater London area
- Reserved seat on No.1 Court at Wimbledon to see the Junior and Senior events
- Visit to Windsor
- Services of a tour manager
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Self-drive breaks to Wimbledon are also offered
Organised by Newmarket Holidays (ABTA V787X)

Chatsworth House and the Peak District

Two days departing June 28

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- Return coach travel
- Overnight half-board accommodation
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- Tour of the Peak District
- Evening entertainment
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Tropical Islands of Chester Zoo

Two days departing June 27

PRICE FROM £119

- Return coach travel
- Overnight half-board accommodation
- Entrance to Chester Zoo
- Visit to Chester
- Single room subject to availability - supplement applies

Book by May 2 and receive 10% discount - telephone bookings only
Organised by Diamond Holidays (ABTA W0552)

Isle of Wight and Osborne House

Four days departing June 26

PRICE FROM £269

- Return coach travel and ferry crossings
- Three nights half-board accommodation
- Entrance to Osborne House
- Visits to Ryde, Godshill, Yarmouth and The Needles Park at Alum Bay
- Tour and wine tasting at the Rosemary Vineyard
- Entrance to Ventnor Botanic Gardens and a cream tea
- Free time in Cowes
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Book by May 2 and receive 10% discount - telephone bookings only
Organised by Diamond Holidays (ABTA W0552)

Yorkshire Cruise and Steam

Three days departing June 19

PRICE FROM £169

- Return coach travel
- Two nights half-board accommodation
- Journey on the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway
- Cruise on the Leeds Liverpool Canal
- Coach tour of the Yorkshire Dales
- Visits to Holmfirth, Skipton, Grassington and Haworth
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Book by May 2 and receive 10% discount - telephone bookings only
Organised by Diamond Holidays (ABTA W0552)

The Railway Children at York Railway Museum

Three days departing August 14

PRICE FROM £189

- Return coach travel
- Two nights half-board accommodation
- Ticket for the matinee performance of The Railway Children (upgrade offered)
- Visit to the National Media Museum, Bradford
- Free time in York and Haworth
- Journey on Keighley and Worth Valley Steam Railway
- Services of a tour driver
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Book by May 2 and receive 10% discount - telephone bookings only
Organised by Diamond Holidays (ABTA W0552)

Norfolk Gardens and The Lavender Harvest

Three days departing July 3

PRICE FROM £219

- Return coach travel
- Two nights half-board accommodation
- Norfolk Lavender Caley Mill grounds tour followed by a cream tea and lavender scones
- Visit to the Lavender Oil Distillery
- Entrance to Sandringham House and Gardens
- Entrance to Bressingham Gardens
- Visit to Cambridge
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Book by May 2 and receive 10% discount - telephone bookings only
Organised by Diamond Holidays (ABTA W0552)

Scarborough, Whitby and York

Four days departing June 26, September 18

PRICE FROM £219

- Return coach travel
- Three nights half-board accommodation
- Visits to Scarborough, Whitby, York and Harrogate
- Journey through the North Yorkshire Moors National Park
- Optional North Yorkshire Moors Railway excursion
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Book by May 2 and receive 10% discount - telephone bookings only
Organised by Diamond Holidays (ABTA W0552)

André Rieu and the Johann Strauss Orchestra in Maastricht

Three days departing July 4 and 10

PRICE FROM £269

- Return coach travel and Channel crossings
- Two nights bed and breakfast accommodation
- Seated ticket to see André Rieu and The Johann Strauss Orchestra on the Vrijthof Square in Maastricht (ticket upgrades offered)
- Visit to Maastricht
- Services of a tour manager
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Eurostar and air breaks also offered
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Five days various departure dates

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- Entrance to the Doge's Palace
- Walking tour of undiscovered Venice
- Boat tour to Murano and glass making demonstration
- Services of a tour manager
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Organised by RivieraTravel (ABTA V4744, ATOL 3430)

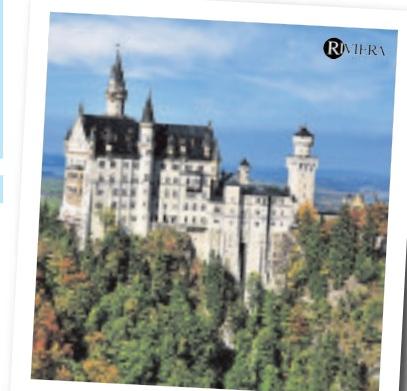
Austrian Tyrol and Innsbruck

Eight days various departure dates

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- Return flights
- Seven nights half-board accommodation
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- Entrance and guided tour of Stams Monastery and Neuschwanstein Castle
- Journey on the Achensee Cog Steam Railway
- Tour of the Italian Tyrol visiting Bolzano and Merano
- Visit to Rattenberg
- See the Oetztal valley glaciers
- Services of a tour manager
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Organised by Riviera Travel (ABTA V4744, ATOL 3430)



fast theticket

Bodyguard preview

See Page 23



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**Count on
Arthur –
Page 23**

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Folkestone & Ostend	£169.95
Sandown, Isle of Wight	£179.95
Alnwick Castle & Holy Island	£249.95
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Brighton	£189.95
Eastbourne	£149.95
Shanklin, Isle of Wight	£179.95
Bournemouth	£179.95
Weymouth	£169.95

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Weston-s-Mare	£179.95
Folkestone & Ostend	£169.95
Sandown, Isle of Wight	£179.95
Torquay & Eden Project	£199.95
Brighton	£199.95
Eastbourne	£149.95
Bournemouth	£179.95
Shanklin, Isle of Wight	£199.95
Babbacombe	£169.95
Tintagel & Padstow	£249.95

5 DAY TOURS DEPART MON 18 MAY

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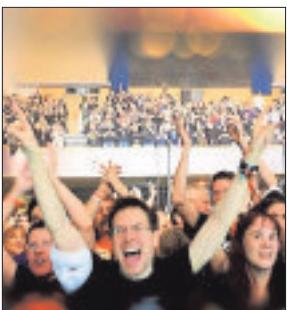
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Paul Simon & Sting



Sunday, 7.30pm
Genting Arena, B'ham
Sting and Paul Simon, two of music's most seminal artists, will bring their On Stage Together tour to Birmingham on Sunday featuring a massive 30-plus song set.
Visit www.gentingarena.co.uk

Marillion Weekend



Friday - Sun
Civic Hall, W'ton
The Marillion Weekend 2015 – UK will take place over three nights at the Civic in Wolverhampton. The concerts will feature a different show every night for fans of the band.
Visit www.wolvscivic.co.uk

Simple Minds



Saturday, 7pm
O2 Academy, B'ham
Fresh from their renaissance, and deserved reappraisal, Simple Minds have a brand new album, 'Big Music' to promote. Simple Minds will play two sets with an interval.
www.o2academybirmingham.co.uk

Who Do You Think You Are?



Thursday – April 18
NEC, B'ham
Inspired by the television series of the same name, Who Do You Think You Are? Live is well-established event offering expert advice to both novice and experienced family historians. Visit www.thenecc.co.uk

OTHER EVENTS

Who Do You Think You Are? Live 2015

Thu at 9.30am - 5.30pm, £16 - £33
National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham, B40 1NT.
Call 0121 780 4141

Gadget Show Live

Friday, Saturday, Sun at 9am, £22.99 - £31.99
National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham, B40 1NT.
Call 0121 780 4141

Charity Disco Night

Friday at 7pm, £3 - £8
Spring Meadow Social Club, Cradley Heath, B64 6LB.
Call 01384 569602

Meet Our Vegetable Garden Team

Mon at 11am - 1pm, Free
Moseley Old Hall, Moseley Old Hall Lane, Featherstone, Wolverhampton, WV10 7HY.
Call 01902 782808

Wedding Fair 2015

Sun at 11am, Free
Birmingham Repertory Theatre, B1 2EP.
Call 0121 236 4455

Antiques for Everyone Spring Fair

Friday, Saturday, Sun at 9am - 5pm, £12
National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham, B40 1NT.
Call 0121 780 4141

LOCAL CINEMA

The Hundred-Foot Journey

Thu at 7.30pm, £3 - £5
Claverley Village Hall, Church Street, Wolverhampton, WV5 7DA.

Easter Workshop

Mon, Tue, Wed at 10am - 4pm, £30

Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock, WS11 1DE.
Call 01543 578762

NT Live The Hard Problem

Thu at 7pm, £10 - £19.50
Artrix Arts Centre, Artrix, Bromsgrove, B61 1PQ.
Call 01527 577330

Thu at 7pm, £10 - £19.50
Light House, Fryer Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1HT.
Call 01902 716055

Thu at 7pm, £10 - £19.50
mac birmingham, Cannon Hill Park, B12 9QH.
Call 0121 446 3232

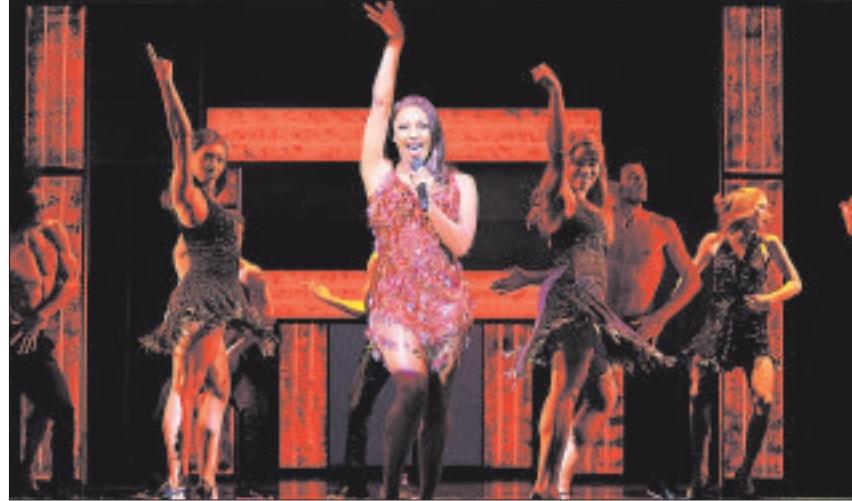
Thu at 7pm, £10 - £19.50
Electric Cinema, 47-49 Station Street, Birmingham, B5 4DY.
Call 0121 643 7879

White God

Friday at 6pm, Saturday at 8.10pm, Sun at 7.45pm, Mon at 2pm, £7.50
mac birmingham, Cannon Hill Park, B12 9QH.
Call 0121 446 3232

Check out full listings in **the ticket** in Friday's Express & Star

Tour has X Factor for star Alexandra



Lady in red -Alexandra with dancers in a scene from the show

X FACTOR winner Alexandra Burke will reprise her West End role as soul star Rachel Marron in Thea Sharrock's hit musical The Bodyguard at Wolverhampton.

The stage version of the 1992 Oscar-nominated movie, that starred Whitney Houston and Kevin Costner, will be at the Grand Theatre from April 21 to May 2.

Miss Burke said: "I couldn't be happier to be joining the tour and I'm

excited to get started. Being on the theatre stage has brought me great happiness."

"It is an honour to have been asked to join the team and I look forward to creating new and long lasting memories with the cast."

She rose to fame winning the fifth series of The X Factor and her debut single Hallelujah went on to sell more than one million copies in the UK. Her first album Overcome also fea-

tured the chart-topping singles Bad Boys and Start Without You. She has toured in her own right and as support for Beyoncé, and went on to take over from Wolverhampton's Beverley Knight in The Bodyguard on the London stage.

At matinee performances the leading role will be played by Pop Idol finalist Zoe Birkett. The Bodyguard returns for a run at Birmingham Hippodrome in August.

Count on this for good time

ON one of his previous appearances in Birmingham the bespectacled buffoon who is Count Arthur Strong had difficulty navigating his way through the theatre curtains and was convinced the stage was facing the wrong way until he turned around.

Since then the Harry Worth throwback, has made the leap from radio to the gogglebox and has won critical acclaim.

The twisted world of Count Arthur, played and written wonderfully by Steve Delaney, is littered with characters who are as out of touch with modern society as he is.

Disasters

Strong's Radio 4 comedy shows started 10 years ago and have run for seven series so far and focus upon the everyday disasters of the once "famous" star of variety who has never really lost his sense of being a showbiz master, even though he is the only one who holds that opinion.

This mixed-up character never misses an opportunity to express his extensive knowledge about entertainment and the rest of the world, of which he is an expert. He has even sent a personal message to theatregoers.

"If you only buy one ticket for something this year buy a ticket for this one twice and bring a friend. I promise you won't regret it. And if you do there must be something wrong with you. No refunds."

He brings his Somebody Up There Licks Me show to the New Alexandra in Birmingham on April 17.

'Buy a ticket, or two - you won't regret it'

Electro dub pioneers in exclusive live date

ELECTRO dub pioneers Dreadzone are returning to the Black Country with an exclusive live appearance at The Robin 2 in Bilston.

The core members Greg Dread, original bassmaster Leo Williams, the unmistakable MC Spee, legendary reggae vocalist Earl 16 alongside Chris Compton on guitar and Bazil on technology make up the current Dreadzone live line up.

As well as live favourites from their back catalogue the band will be playing tracks from Escapades at their show tomorrow.

Tickets are £15 advance and £17 on the door. Call the box office on 01902 401211 or book online at www.therobin.co.uk

Musical feast is on the Cafe menu

LARKIN Poe take the stage at the Kitchen Garden Cafe, King's Heath, Birmingham on Wednesday, April 15 with support from Raevannan Husband-ees.

This is a standing only show which is being staged at the Hare & Hounds, York Road, King's Heath and tickets are £13 in advance or £15 on the night. Doors open 7.30pm and the show starts 8pm.

Stourbridge Folk Club hosts founder member of The Bushbury Mountain Daredevils, Eddy Morton for the launch of his new album, Rainbow Man, on April 16. Tickets are £5 and doors open 8pm.

New Wulfrun date for Dr Hook gig

THE Dr Hook gig - postponed after lead singer Ray Sawyer was injured in a fall - has been rearranged for Thursday, May 14 at the Wulfrun Hall in Wolverhampton.

The show was meant to take place in March but Sawyer broke his arm so the remaining eight dates of the Hooked on Hits tour had to be postponed. All tickets for the original date remain valid for the new date.

Dr Hook enjoyed considerable success in the 1970s with hit singles including When You're in Love with a Beautiful Woman. Tickets, £29.15 are available from Midland Box Office: 0870 320 7000.

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Classy joint – The Fox at Chetwynd Aston



Coriander and lime chicken, pak choi and noodle salad with Thai coconut dressing



Sitting comfortably in welcoming surroundings

Whichever way you look at it this classy Fox is a real winner

IF The Fox had a trophy cabinet, it would look something like the one Sir Alex Ferguson filled during his tenure at Man Utd.

In recent years, The Fox at Chetwynd Aston, Newport has enjoyed wins from five respected guide books.

Since 2007, it's featured in the Good Pub Guide, winning its County Dining Pub of the Year more times than any restaurant ought.

It's a perennial feature of the AA Pub Guide, it never misses a spot in the Good Beer Guide, Alastair Sawday rates it as though it had some sort of divine right and even Michelin has included it in its listing for the UK's best pubs.

They say that when you find a successful recipe, you ought to bottle it. Not that that advice has reached The Fox. They tend

By Andy Richardson

to bottle ales, fine wines and a deliciously fruity juice called Bumbleberry. Recipes are saved for the kitchen.

The Fox is part of the Brunning and Price group, which also owns The Armoury, in Shrewsbury. It's one of the region's finest pub groups, coupling decent, generously-portioned food at affordable prices and an impressive selection of drinks with good standards of service. The quality of both food and service at The Fox is resolutely high.

It's been the foodie equivalent of some sort of 21st century winning machine, notching up success after success as it continues to out-gun, out-run and out-strip the competition.

I'm not convinced with the Good Pub Guide's adjudication that it's the very best

dining pub in Shropshire – I can think of others where food is of a higher quality – but it certainly deserves its recognition. It is undoubtedly one of the very best.

The Fox is a large Edwardian-style pub with a mix of quiet nooks and crannies, bright sunny rooms and a busy central bar.

During weekends, high days and holidays, its largest vaulted room leads out onto a south-facing terrace, with views over the gently-rolling countryside and wooded hills beyond.

Strengths

When my friend and I visited, our thoughts couldn't have been further from al fresco dining on summery afternoons. We met for dinner a deux on a decidedly chilly evening, when the wind was blowing a hooley.

One of the key strengths of The Fox is its

staff. Overwhelmingly well-mannered and polite, they are well-drilled and pay attention to detail at all times. Despite the inevitable rush at the bar, they remain relatively unfustered and their youthful exuberance and energy transmits itself to diners.

It's a classy operation. But the food is my favourite part. And on my most recent visit, it didn't disappoint. The Fox isn't at the standards of, say, a Michelin Bib Gourmand venue. Nor is it particularly finessed. It does, however, offer an innovative and creative selection of seasonal food at reasonable prices.

It's no surprise that The Fox notches up accolades like a lothario adding notches to a bedpost. It consistently achieves high standards, provides a great environment for meeting-and-eating and a menu that offers more than same-staples like fish-and-chips, or lasagne with garlic bread.

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Rail travel is standard class with the option to upgrade. Departs Saturday morning/early afternoon from Birmingham New Street, Shrewsbury, Stafford or Wolverhampton, returning on the Sunday afternoon/early evening to give plenty of free time for shopping and sightseeing.

Theatre Showstopper from £229.⁹⁵

This popular theatre package to the West End departs from Birmingham New Street, Shrewsbury, Stafford or Wolverhampton on the Friday morning returning on the Sunday afternoon/early evening.

Standard class travel is included with the option to upgrade plus two nights stay at a four-star London hotel of your choice (hotel supplements may apply). Includes a top priced ticket for a Friday evening performance.

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For the Theatre Weekend with Dinner option see the matinee performance before heading to the hotel for an evening meal. The Saturday Night option includes a ticket for the show to see an evening performance.

Both breaks include a theatre ticket, overnight stay in a four-star outer London hotel plus full English breakfast.

Pick-up points offered are Dudley, Shrewsbury, Telford, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

*The "from" price and price bands vary for each show – see brochure for details. Single rooms subject to availability – supplements apply.

Organised by Omega Events Ltd (ABTA Y590X)



For a theatre brochure please call the promotions team on (01902) 319999 (Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm), or go to expressandstar.com/starextratravel

Please read brochure/web page for full information plus terms and conditions

CHOICE



Amanda Mealing

Casualty

(BBC1, 9.20pm)
A pregnant young woman gives birth in the back of Dixie's ambulance – but when her pushy teacher arrives at the hospital claiming to be adopting the baby, Connie suspects the confused new mum was coerced into the agreement. A schoolboy takes revenge on the bully who is making his life a misery, although it backfires when both his tormentor and his teacher are badly injured. Cal is hurting following Taylor's disappearance and apologises to Ethan for stealing his money. Hospital drama with the staff of Holby's accident and emergency department as they deal with more sick and injured patients. Starring Amanda Mealing, Derek Thompson, George Rainsford and Richard Winsor.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00 Saturday Kitchen** Live. **11.30** Mary Berry Cooks. **(R) 12.00 BBC News:** Weather. **12.10 Football Focus.** **12.50 Saturday Sportsday.** **1.00 Formula 1: Chinese Grand Prix –** Due to Highlights. **1.15 Go! The Masters** Highlights. **3.30 Einstein Hunt.** **(R) 4.15 Rowing:** The Boat Races. Live coverage of the men's and women's University Boat Races on the River Thames, as Oxford aim to retain their titles against traditional rivals Cambridge. **6.35 BBC News.** **6.45 Regional Programme.** **6.55 Pointless Celebrities:** Alexander Armstrong and Richard Osman present as famous faces take part in the general knowledge quiz in which they try to come up with the least likely correct answers to a series of questions posed to members of the public. **8.30 The National Lottery: In It to Win It.** **New Entries:** Out of which five contestants answer questions to scoop a big cash prize. Only those in the winners' row will have a chance of taking home the loot, so they will need to get all the answers right – as well as a little bit of luck on their side. Includes the Lotto and Thunderball draws. **9.20 Casualty.** A pregnant young woman gives birth in the back of Dixie's ambulance – but when her pushy teacher arrives at the hospital claiming to be adopting the baby, Connie suspects the confused new mum was coerced into the agreement. A schoolboy takes revenge on the bully who is making his life a misery, although it backfires when both his tormentor and his teacher are badly injured. Cal is hurting following Taylor's disappearance and apologises to Ethan for stealing his money. **10.10 BBC News:** Weather. **10.30 Match of the Day:** Gary Lineker presents highlights of the latest Premier League matches, including Tottenham Hotspur v Aston Villa at White Hart Lane and Burnley v Arsenal at Turf Moor. **11.00 The Football League Show.** Manish Basbin presents highlights and all the goals from the latest fixtures in the Championship, League One and League Two. **1.15 Weather for the Week Ahead.** **1.20 BBC News:** Weather.

BBC2

6.00 TBA. **6.45 Film:** The Magic Box. (1951) Biopic of cinema pioneer William Friese-Greene, starring Robert Donat. **8.30 Film:** The Mat from Laramie. (1955) Western, starring James Stewart. **11.00 Fred Dibnah's Magnificent Monuments.** **(R) 10.40 Fred Dibnah's Magnificent Monuments.** **9.10 The Nature of Britain.** **(R) 12.00 Food & Drink.** **(R) 12.30 Michel Roux's Service.** **(R) 1.30 A Taste of Britain.** **2.00 Film:** The Philadelphia Story. (1940) Romantic comedy, starring Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant. **3.50 Flog It!** **4.30 Final Score.** **5.30 Kew on a Plate.** **(R) 6.30 Gardeners' World.** As the weather begins to warm up, there's plenty to be getting on with in the garden, with Monty Don welcoming viewers back to Longmeadow and offering advice on which tasks people should be getting on with at this time of the year. **(R) 7.00 Dad's Army.** The Walmington platoon plans to stage a re-enactment of the St George and the dragon story as the opening of the Wings for Victory fundraising campaign. **8.30 Fathers Hopes and ARP wardens** have had the same idea. Vintage comedy first shown in 1977, starring Arthur Lowe. **7.30 Golf: The Masters Live.** Hazel Irvine introduces coverage of the third day from the Augusta National in Georgia, as the opening Major of the year continues. Overnight leader and eventual champion Bubba Watson had his worst round of the tournament at this stage last year, carding a two-over-par 74 that allowed 20-year-old Jordan Spieth to gain four strokes and join him at the top of the leaderboard. A strong European contingent never quite managed to challenge Watson for the title, with the likes of Lee Westwood, Thomas Bjørn, Jonas Blixt and Miguel Ángel Jiménez all in with a chance in the latter stages, but unable to put enough pressure on the American victor. With commentary by Peter Alliss, Ken Brown, Andrew Cotter and Paul Azinger. Subsequent programmes subject to change. **12.00 Film:** The Private Lives of Pippa Lee. (2009) A middle-aged woman forced to live in a dull retirement community by her older husband looks back on her wild youth. Drama, starring Robin Wright, Alan Arkin and Winona Ryder.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Bottom Knocker Street. **6.10 Bottom Knocker Street.** **(R) 6.20 Bottom Knocker Street.** **(R) 6.35 Dino Dan.** **(R) 6.45 Dino Dan.** **(R) 7.00 Share a Story: Craft Creative.** **7.15 Soothing.** **(R) 7.25 Super Star.** **8.00 Game a Day.** **(R) 7.30 Scrambled!: Scramble.** **8.35 Scrambled!: Nerds & Monsters.** **(R) 8.00 Scrambled!: Horrid Henry.** **8.50 Scrambled!: Thunderbirds Are Go.** **8.30 Scrambled!: Hulk and the Agents of Smash.** **9.25 The Jeremy Kyle Show.** **(R) 11.25 The Jeremy Kyle Show.** **(R) 12.30 The Jeremy Kyle Show.** **(R) 12.30 ITV News:** Weather. **12.40 The Jeremy Kyle Show.** **(R) 12.40 Jeremy Kyle Show.** (2002) The dog and his chums reunite to solve a baffling mystery on the tourist resort of Spooky Island. Live-action comedy adventure, with Sarah Michelle Gellar and Matthew Lillard. **3.20 Off Their Rockers.** **(R) 3.50 The Unforgettable Benny Hill.** **(R) 4.30 Big Stars Little Star.** **(R) 5.30 Regional Programme:** Weather. **5.45 ITV News:** Weather. **6.00 New You've Been Framed!** Harry Hill narrates a comical selection of misfortunes suffered by viewers, featuring everyone from giddy grandmas, cube kids and crazy animals to blow-the-belt mishaps, practical jokers and painful-looking accidents. **7.00 Ninja Warriors UK.** **8.00 Britain's Got Talent.** New series. Alan and Declan host the nationwide search, which sees a wide variety of acts from comedians to contortionists, singers to spoon players, compete for the chance to win a huge cash prize and a coveted slot at the Royal Variety Performance. **9.20 Play to the Whistle.** **10.05 ITV News:** Weather. **10.20 Film: Backdrift.** (1991) The two sons of a fireman who died in the line of duty turn to a life into the profession. However, a family development between them because the elder brother is convinced his sibling is not up to the job – until a mission to uncover the identity of a serial arsonist gives him the chance to prove his worth. Action drama, starring Kurt Russell, William Baldwin, Robert De Niro, Jennifer Leigh and Donald Sutherland. **12.50 Jackpot247.** Viewers get the chance to participate in live interactive gaming from the comfort of their sofas. **3.00 The Jeremy Kyle Show USA.** **(R) 3.40 ITV Nightscreen.**

CHANNEL 4

6.10 How I Met Your Mother. **6.35 The King of Queens.** **(R) 7.00 The King of Queens.** **(R) 7.25 The Grid.** **8.00 Grand National – Morning Line.** **10.00 Grand National – Saturday Brunch.** **1.00 Channel 4 racing.** Live coverage of the third day of the Grand National meeting. **3.25 Channel 4 Racing:** Grand National. Live coverage of the world's most famous steeplechase at Aintree. **5.15 TBA.** **5.20 Channel 4 News.** **6.20 Film: Independence Day.** (1996) A fleet of huge flying saucers launches a devastating and unprovoked attack on Earth. As survivors try to flee the seemingly unstoppable alien invaders, the courageous US president, an ace pilot and a computer genius come up with a plan to take the fight to the enemy and save the human race. **Roland Emmerich's sci-fi adventure,** starring Will Smith, Bill Pullman, Jeff Goldblum, Mary McDonnell, Randy Quaid, Robert Loggia and Harry Connick Jr. **9.00 Film: I Give It a Year.** (2013) Premiere. A couple marry after a whirlwind romance, but family and friends have doubts about the relationship. As their first anniversary approaches, they both begin to wonder if they are right for each other, especially when faced with more appealing alternative partners. Romantic comedy, starring Rose Byrne, Rafe Spall, Anna Faris and Simon Baker. **11.00 Film: She's All That.** (1999) A popular teenager bets his friends he can turn a shy and frumpy female student into a prom queen. Romantic comedy, starring Freddie Prinze Jr and Rachel Leigh Cook. **12.50 Alan Carr: Chatty Man Grand National Special.** Another chance to see the Grand National-themed edition of the comedian's regular chat show, in which he looked ahead to a weekend of horse-racing. With music by Nick Jonas. **(R) 1.50 Hollyoaks.** Omnibus. Theresa makes a shocking discovery. **2.00 Dark.** **2.30 The Return of the Living Dead.** **3.00 Scream.** **3.30 Lorraine.** Sunita Shroff helps a couple who want to find a house in Oxfordshire, but cannot afford a family home in the picturesque town of Thame and have hardly looked anywhere else. **(R) 5.00 Phil Spencer.** Secret Agent. Phil visits Worthing, West Sussex, where he helps a couple who want to sell their grand Victorian house they have called home for the past 30 years. **(R) 6.00 SuperCasino.**

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **10.00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.** **(R) 10.35 Chinese Food in Minutes.** **(R) 10.50 The Dog Rescuers.** **(R) 11.15 Ice Road Truckers.** **(R) 12.10 Ice Road Truckers.** **(R) 1.10 Ice Road Truckers.** **(R) 2.10 Film: The Umbrella.** Sex and the Married Detective. **(R) 3.00 Detective Drama,** starring Peter Falk. **4.00 Film: Columbo:** The Most Crucial Game. (1972) Detective drama, starring Peter Falk and Robert Clary. **5.20 The Nightmare Neighbour Next Door.** **(R) 6.15 TBA.** **7.05 Police Interceptors.** Officers are forced to exercise caution when they stop an uninsured driver who is known to have a violent past, while Jon Peacock and police dog Brad are on the hunt for suspected burglars. Sarah Copas gets a whiff of something illegal. Mike Templeman pulls over a white van with rather too many faults and one unlucky driver discovers that there is no fooling Dan Brignshaw. **(R) 8.00 5 News Weekend.** **8.05 NCIS: Los Angeles.** A taxi driver is murdered just hours after sending an e-mail to an old alias that Callen used when he went undercover to investigate three marines who stole \$5million. **(R) 9.00 NCIS.** A Navy lieutenant is found dead in the Pentagon's custodial closet, and surveillance footage indicates she was killed by a co-worker. However, Ziva and the team discover her supposed assailant actually died of a heart attack days before the crime was committed. Meanwhile, suspicions are raised regarding the eyeball left in Tony's drink, and the investigators' attention is fixed on the port-to-port murderer, who appears to still be at large. **(R) 10.00 CSI: Crime Scene Investigation.** New evidence leads Sara to reopen a 10-year-old case in which a man was convicted of killing his wife and daughter before turning his gun on himself. **10.55 Law & Order: Special Victims Unit.** The team tries to solve the murder of a paediatrician who had threatened to sue his former employers and the police after being convicted of sexually assaulting patients. **(R) 11.50 Access.** Showbiz news and gossip. **12.00 SuperCasino.**

DIGITAL

BBC Three
7.15 Wallace & Gromit: A Close Shave
7.45 Film: Wallace & Gromit in The Curse of the Were-Rabbit (2005) **9.05 Film:** Enemy of the State (1998) **11.05 Family Guy 1.00 Bluestone 421** **3.00 Killer Magic 2.00 Uncle 3.25 TBA** **4.00 Close Shave**
BBC Four
7.00 Ice Age Giants **8.00 Wild China** **9.00 Inspector Montalbano** **10.30 Kings of Rock 'n' Roll** **12.30 Top of the Pops:** 1980 **1.05 Timeshift:** Mods, Rockers and Bank Holiday Mayhem **2.05 Wild China** **3.05 Ice Age Giants** **4.05 Close Shave**
ITV2
11.00 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway **12.30 Totally Bonkers** **Guinness World Records** **1.00 Britain's Got More Talent:** Amanda's Top Ten **2.00 Britain's Got More Talent:** Alesha's Top Ten Moments **3.00 Britain's Got More Talent:** David's Top Ten **4.00 Britain's Got More Talent:** Mr Bean's Top Ten **5.00 The Evil of Terrestria** (1982) **7.30 Film:** Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure (1989) **9.20 Britain's Got More Talent** **10.20 Celebrity Juice** **11.05 Britain's Got Talent** **12.30 Britain's Got More Talent** **1.30 Hell's Kitchen USA** **2.20 Crazy Beaches** **2.45 TeleShopping** **5.45 ITV2 Nightscreen**
ITV3
1.35 Wycliffe **3.50 Rosemary & Thyme** **4.55 Agatha Christie's Marple** **7.00 Doc Martin** **8.00 Foyle's War** **10.00 A** **1.05 Inspector Morse**
ITV4
11.30 Pawn Stars **12.30 Counting Cars** **1.20 British Superbike Championship Highlights** **2.20 BRDC Formula 4 Championship Highlights** **3.25 British Touring Car Championship Highlights** **5.00 Storage Wars:** **6.00 New** **6.00 Storage Wars:** **7.00 Shed and Buried** **8.00 River Monsters** **9.00 Film:** Sudden Impact (1983) **11.25 Film:** Crank (2006) **1.10 Film:** Boogeyman (2004) **2.55 ITV4 Nightscreen**
E4
11.00 Melissa & Joey **12.00 How I Met Your Mother** **1.00 TBA** **4.00 The Big Bang Theory** **9.00 TBA** **11.40 Rude Tube** **12.35 Channel 4's Comedy Gala** **1.35 Bodysnatchers:** Nips, Tucks and Tattoos **2.35 The 100** **3.20 If You Met Your Mother** **4.05 Baby Daddy** **4.45 TBA**
Film4
11.00 Anastasia (1997) **1.00 Tales from Earthsea** (2006) **3.15 The Rugrats Movie** (1999) **4.50 27 Dresses** (2008) **7.00 10 Things I Hate About You** (1999) **9.00 Hot Tub Time Machine** (2010) **10.55 The Football Factory** (2004)

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CHOICE

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.30 Match of the Day.** (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Sunday Politics. **12.15** MOTD2 Extra. With the Match of the Day team. **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** Bargain Hunt. **2.00** Formula 1: Chinese Grand Prix. **3.55** Escape to the Country. **4.25** Points of View. **4.40** Songs of Praise. **5.15** Pointless Celebrities. (R)

6.05 BBC News.**6.20 Regional Programme.**

6.30 Countryfile. The latest rural developments, including reports on issues affecting country communities and insights into the life of the modern farmer. Including Weather for the Week Ahead.

7.30 MasterChef. John Torode and Gregg Wallace present the cookery competition, as a series of contestants are put through gruelling culinary challenges.

8.00 Antiques Roadshow. Fiona Bruce and Philip Mould visit the Hall House in Lincolnshire. Items include a ceramic model of London Zoo's first elephant from the 19th century, an engraved glass vase won at a fair in the 1920s, a collection of memorabilia relating to the Duke of Windsor and a children's chair in the shape of a starfish. There's also an interview with Professor Timon Screech about Britain's centuries of trade with Japan, accompanied by an ornate lacquer chest that may have arrived with the first shipment of Japanese treasures in 1614.

9.00 Poldark. Ross finds there is a fever at Bodmin Jail, and when he discovers that Jim is near death, he and Dwight embark on a desperate course of action to save their friend.

10.00 BBC News.**10.20 Regional Programme.**

10.30 Match of the Day 2. Gabby Logan reviews the latest Premier League action, featuring Manchester United v Manchester City at Old Trafford and Queens Park Rangers v Chelsea at Loftus Road.

11.30 Film: **The Last Castle.** (2001) A court-martialed general sent to a high-security military jail sets out to bring down the cruel warden. Thriller, starring Robert Redford.

1.35 Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.40 BBC News.**

BBC2

6.00 Great British Garden Revival. (R) **7.00** Countryfile. **8.30 The Beechgrove Garden.** **9.00** The Football League Show. (R) **10.20 Saturday Kitchen Best Bites.** **11.00** The Great British Getaway. (R) **12.50** A Taste of Britain. (R) **1.20** Film: Little Women. (1949) Four sisters find maturity and romance during the American Civil War. Oscar-winning drama based on Louisa May Alcott's classic novel, starring June Allyson and Elizabeth Taylor. **3.15 Triathlon.** **4.45 TBA** **5.30 Flog It!** (R)

6.30 Golf: The Masters Live.

Hazel Irvine introduces coverage of the fourth and final day from the Augusta National in Georgia, as the opening Major of the year reaches a conclusion. America's Bubba Watson secured his second title in three years here 12 months ago, finishing three strokes clear of compatriot Jordan Spieth and Sweden's Jonas Blixt. England's Lee Westwood was the highest-placed British player in seventh place, with Northern Ireland's world number one Rory McIlroy and 57-year-old German Bernhard Langer among those one shot behind him. The drought for British winners here goes all the way back to 1996, when Nick Faldo secured the third of his Green Jackets, and despite a strong representation among the world's elite, European golfers have also struggled to make their mark here for a surprisingly long time. With commentary by Peter Alliss, Ken Brown, Andrew Cotter and Paul Azinger, subsequent programmes subject to change.

12.00 Film: **First Snow.** (2006) A salesman stranded in a remote New Mexico town is told by a psychic that he will die the next day if it snows. As the weather grows colder, he becomes obsessed with revisiting his past as he strives to find a way to change his destiny before it is too late. Thriller, starring Guy Pearce, Piper Perabo, William Hurtner and JK Simmons. **1.35 Sign Zone: Countryfile.** Matt Baker finds out the importance of rabbits in the Brecklands of Norfolk. Ellie Harrison forages for metal to make sculptures, and James Wong launches the Grow Wild campaign. (R) **2.30** Holby City. Jeremy is released from prison but it seems there will be no chance of a quiet return to work. Sacha is delighted to see Essie again, while Arthur suffers first-day nerves on AAU. (R)

ITV

6.00 CITV: Bottom Knocker Street. **6.10** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.20** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan. (R) **6.45** Dino Dan. (R) **7.10** Caniculls. (R) **7.10** Soochy. (R) **7.25** Super Stories: Sheep & Sheep. (R) **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: Nords & Monsters. (R) **7.50** Scrambled!: The Aquabats! Super Show! (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Horrid Henry. **8.50** Scrambled!: Hulk and the Agents of Smash. **9.25** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) **10.25** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) **12.25** ITV News: Weather. **12.30** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **1.30** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **2.30** Britain's Got Talent. (R) **3.50** All Star Family Fortunes. (R) **4.35** Ninja Warriors UK. (R) **5.35** You've Been Framed! (R)

6.05 Regional Programme: Weather.**6.15 ITV News:** Weather.

6.30 The Chase. Bradley Walsh presents as four celebrity contestants pit their wits against ruthless quiz genius the Chaser in the hope of winning a potential prize worth thousands of pounds. They must work as a team and play strategically to answer general knowledge questions against the clock and race down the game board to the exit without being caught.

7.30 Off Their Rockers. Hidden-camera show in which fearless senior citizens play pranks on the public.

8.00 Vera. When the remains of a teenager are found half-buried in a woods, Vera finds herself investigating a 30-year-old mystery. Identical twins Carrie Telling, a girl who disappeared during the 1984 miners' strike, the team retrieves news footage from the protests that shows her taking pictures in the background. It appears she got caught up in the unrest that day, contradicting her father's assertion that she went straight home. Photographs recovered from her camera yield further revelations for Vera. What did Carrie discover that ultimately led to her death?

10.00 ITV News: Weather.**10.15 Olivier Awards 2015.**

12.00 Premiership Rugby Union. **12.45** The Store. Home shopping. **2.30** The Jeremy Kyle Show USA. (R) **3.10** British Superbike Championship Highlights. **3.40** ITV Newsnight. Text-based information service. **5.05** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.15 How I Met Your Mother. **6.40** How I Met Your Mother. **7.05** British GT Championship. **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Fairly Odd Parents. (R) **10.15** Day Break. (R) **11.30** George Clarke's Amazing Spaces. (R) **1.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **2.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **2.25** The Simpsons. (R) **3.25** The Simpsons. (R) **3.55** Wanda and the Alien. (R) **8.45** Zack and Quack. **8.20** TBA. **8.30** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. **9.30** Dora and Friends. (R) **10.00** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.35** The Dog Rescuers. (R) **11.00** The Hotel Inspector Returns. (R) **12.00** The Hotel Inspector Returns. (R) **1.00** Film: Are We There Yet? (2012) Family comedy, starring Ice Cube. **4.40** Film: Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory. (1971) Musical fantasy, with Gene Wilder.

6.35 Channel 4 News.

7.00 Three in a Bed. Guest houses compete for the title of best B&B – a competition judged by counting up the profits when guests pay only what they consider their stay to have been worth.

8.00 TBA.

9.00 Indian Summers. Drama set during the summer of 1932, telling the story of the decline of the British Empire and the birth of modern India. Starring Julie Walters, Henry Lloyd-Hughes, Jemima West, Craig Parkinson and Amber Rose Revah.

10.05 Gogglebox. Capturing the households' instant reactions to what they are watching on TV from the comfort of their own sofas. Narrated by Caroline Aherne. (R)

11.10 Film: **In Fear.** (2013) A couple go to Ireland for a music festival, but get hopelessly lost while driving through a series of country roads. Their plight turns deadly as they are terrorised by mysterious figures lurking in the darkness, while an encounter with a seemingly harmless local brings dangers of its own. Horror, starring Iain De Caestecker, Alice Englert and Allen Leech.

12.40 Film: **Billion Stone.** (1969) A domineering rich man official lives by a strict set of rules, and treats the staff working under him harshly. While on holiday, he befriends a free-spirited woman who encourages him to take a more relaxed outlook on life – but then discovers she is in love with one of his employees, whom he intends to dismiss. Comedy drama, starring Upal Dutt and Suhasini Mulay. In Hindi, Bengali and Gujarati. Part of the Indian Film season. **2.25 Come Dine with Me.** (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! Peppa Pig. **6.05** Bananas in Pyjamas. (R) **6.15** TBA. **6.20** Angelina Ballerina. (R) **6.35** Pip Ahoy! (R) **6.45** The Mr Men Show. (R) **7.00** Chloe's Closet. (R) **7.10** Roobarb and Custard. (R) **7.20** Day Break. (R) **7.30** Moddy. (R) **7.30** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.40** Little Princess. (R) **7.55** Wanda and the Alien. (R) **8.45** Zack and Quack. **8.20** TBA. **8.30** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. **9.30** Dora and Friends. (R) **10.00** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.35** The Dog Rescuers. (R) **11.00** The Hotel Inspector Returns. (R) **12.00** The Hotel Inspector Returns. (R) **1.00** Film: Are We There Yet? (2012) Family comedy, starring Ice Cube. **4.40** Film: Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory. (1971) Musical fantasy, with Gene Wilder.

6.45 5 News Weekend.**6.45 Film:** **Spider-Man.** (2002) A clumsy teenager develops superhuman powers after a genetically engineered spider bites him. At first his fantastic skills delight him, but his elation is severely tempered by a family tragedy, prompting him to dedicate his talents to combating evil. However, he faces a baptism of fire in the form of crazed villain the Green Goblin. Comic-book superhero adventure, with Tobey Maguire, Kirsten Dunst, Willem Dafoe, James Franco and Rosemary Harris.
9.00 Film: **Olympus Has Fallen.**

(2013) Premiere. A secret service agent is assigned to protect the president after a trap is sprung. As he prepares to leave his assignment, terrorists take control of the White House and hold the president hostage. The agent is trapped in the building, and uses his inside knowledge to rescue the head of state. Action thriller, starring Gerard Butler, Aaron Eckhart and Morgan Freeman. **11.15 Film:** **Gamer.** (2009) A convict is forced to take part in a violent real-life video game using mind-control technology, but plans to escape. Sci-fi thriller, starring Gerard Butler and Michael C. Hall.

1.00 SuperCasino. Viewers get the chance to take part in live interactive gaming, with a mix of roulette-wheel spins and lively chat from the presenting team. **3.10** TBA. **4.00** House Doctor. A cottage with two many personal touches. **4.25** Make It Big. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Three

7.00 Film: Puss in Boots: The Three Diablos (2012) **7.10** B.O.B.'s Big Break 7.25 Megamind: The Button of Doom 7.40 Wallace & Gromit: A Matter of Loaf and Dough 7.55 The Ark (1981) **8.00** Tatoo 10.45 Family Guy 11.00 American Dad! 11.50 Family Guy 12.15 Tatoo 12.55 Meth and Madness 13.55 Bluestone 4 2.25 TBA 2.40 Tatoo 3.20 Killer Magic 3.50 Close

BBC Four

7.00 Horizon: Seeing Stars 8.00 Voyager: To the Moon and Beyond: Do We Finally Need the Moon? **7.00** The Sky at Night 10.30 Biggest Band Break Up and Make Ups 11.30 More Dangerous Songs: And the Banned Played On 12.30 Tubular Bells: The Mike Oldfield Story 1.30 Horizon: Seeing Stars 2.30 Voyager: To the Final Frontier 3.30 The Sky at Night 4.00 Close

ITV2

11.35 Take Me Out 12.45 Scorpion 1.45 **Film:** Honey (2003) 3.40 Film: Despicable Me (2010) 5.35 Britain's Got Talent 7.00 Film: 10.30 Britain's Got More Talent 8.00 Film: The Back-up Plan (2010) 10.10 Film: The Bourne Identity (2002) 12.30 Film: Almost Married (2014)

ITV3

11.20 A Touch of Frost 1.30 Sherlock Holmes: The Sign of Four 3.45 Agatha Christie's Marple 5.45 Inspector Morse 8.00 Inside Asylum: Luxury by Royal Appointment 9.00 Film: Gosford Park (2001) 11.50 Film: Angela's Ashes (1999) 2.30 The John Thaw Story 3.25 ITV3 Nightscreen 3.40 Emmerdale

ITV4

11.05 Shed and Buried 12.05 Pawn Stars 3.50 Film: The Appaloosa (1966) 5.55 Rude(ish) Tube Short 3.00 How I Met Your Mother 4.00 Brooklyn Nine-Nine 4.30 The Big Bang Theory 8.00 TBA 10.00 Rude Tube 11.00 Bodyshock: Nips, Tucks and Tattoos 12.00 The 100 1.00 2 Broke Girls 1.30 Rules of Engagement 2.30 Melissa & Joey 3.30 Hollywood

Film4

11.00 Horizon: Laputa: Castle in the Sky (1986) 3.35 Horton Hears a Who! (2008) 5.15 Inspector Gadget (1999) 6.55 Drillbit Taylor (2008) 9.00 Transporter 3 (2008) 11.05 Copacat (1995) 1.30 The Wind Rises (2013) 3.30 Close



Gregg Wallace & John Torode

MasterChef (BBC1, 7.30pm)

Restaurateur John Torode and radio presenter Gregg Wallace host the cookery competition as contestants are put through gruelling culinary challenges to test not just their skills, but also their knowledge of food and ability to cope in a professional kitchen. The semi-finals begin with the eight hopefuls split into teams of four and challenged to the Relay Invention test, in which both groups must come up with a single dish between them. Using a chicken and a range of vegetables, herbs and spices, each team member has just 20 minutes to make their contribution - but as they cannot speak, they must leave clues behind to help their teammates decipher what the dish is supposed to be. Continues tomorrow.

FILM CHOICES

MONDAY

Vantage Point, Channel 5, 10.55pm

An assassination attempt is made on the life of the US president during a terrorism summit. The story unfolds from several perspectives, including that of the secret service agents charged with protecting the head of state, a news producer covering the event and a man in the crowd who may have caught the perpetrator on camera. Thriller, starring Dennis Quaid, Matthew Fox and William Hurt. (2008)

TUESDAY

Moonlight Mile, BBC1, 11.35pm

A man who is distraught after his fiancee's murder goes to stay with her parents, while they sort out her belongings and cancel the wedding arrangements. However, he feels guilt and suffers more emotional turmoil when he starts to fall for another woman. Drama set in the 1970s, starring Jake Gyllenhaal, Ellen Pompeo and Dustin Hoffman. (2002)



Vantage Point, Monday, Channel 5, 10.55pm

WEDNESDAY

Wild Hogs, BBC1, 11.15pm

Four friends going through midlife crises decide to dust off their old motorcycles and hit the open road on a 2,000-mile cross-country trip. However, a run-in with a biker gang disrupts their carefree adventure. Comedy, starring Tim Allen. (2007)

THURSDAY

Look Again, Channel 5, 3.15pm

A woman survives an encounter in her home with a masked intruder, who murders her partner. The police quickly apprehend a suspect, but she believes they have arrested someone innocent. When she meets her friend's new man, she becomes convinced he is the real killer. Thriller, starring Morena Baccarin. (2011)

FRIDAY

Sex Drive, Channel 4, 12.20am

Sex-starved teenager Ian meets a woman on the internet who agrees to relieve him of his virginity. To reach his date with destiny, he steals his brother's car and embarks on a disastrous trip across America, accompanied by his womanising friend and the girl of his dreams. Comedy, starring Josh Zuckerman. (2008)

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The day of execution arrives for Tommy

So far, 2015 is shaping up to be a good year for period dramas, whether it's BBC Two's prestigious adaptation of Poldark, or viewers swooning over the shirtless scything action in Poldark.

Banished, which follows the first prisoners sent to Australia in 1788 and their battle to survive, hasn't made quite so many headlines. However, as we reach the final episode this week, it has offered plenty of drama and, as you'd expect given its premise and the fact that it was written by Cracker creator Jimmy McGovern, plenty of grit.

Actor Julian Rhind-Tutt, who stars as convict Tommy Barrett, certainly seems glad that Banished hasn't gone in for the pristine costumes and sweeping romance of some other dramas – for a start, it meant he was cast again type.

He's explains: "It was a very interesting opportunity to play a convict. Tommy is more of a manly man than any role I've had the chance to play recently. I've been playing aristocratic people,

politicians, advisors, people like that. But Sita [Williams], our producer who I worked with 15 years ago kindly remembered that there are other areas that we might like to explore, and so she thought it would be interesting for me to have a look at Tommy Barrett."

In fact it seems just being on the set was an education: "I read that they sent these 700-odd people and 300 soldiers out to Australia with only six scythes. And with that they were expected to start their own agricultural community. There is, of course, a valid historical opinion that the authorities didn't really care that much about what happened to them."

"But what struck me most often is I stood on the set – surrounded by only a small collection of tawdry canvas tents and the most basic amenities to survive - was how swiftly and miraculously today's modern metropolis of Sydney has been created."

Rhind-Tutt even picked up a few new survival skills of his own to put on his CV. He says: "To a full driving

licence and scuba diving I'll be adding 'axe work' – I had excellent training from some real Australian men, and I can now split kindling wood with some degree of efficiency."

"I can also say I have worked with jeeches. It's the moment where they actually suck the blood and engorge themselves that you have to get over psychologically, but I tried it in good heart as part of our many adventures there."

But will he get to put those skills to use if Banished comes back for a second series?

It's not looking promising, as Tommy shares a tender embrace with his wife Elizabeth on the morning of his hanging. They are aware it could be their last moments together, but not everyone is ready to give up hope, as James Freeman pleads with the Governor to spare his friend's life, and the Reverend Johnson prevails upon Private Buckley to forgive his attacker. However, it's Spragg who's taking the most direct action as he fires up the convicts to make it clear how they feel about the execution...



David Wenham stars in Banished, BBC2, Thursday, 9pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY

Inside Harley Street
BBC2, 9pm

Film-maker Vanessa Engle is known for making insightful slice-of-life documentaries focusing on everything from dog-walkers and slimmers to orthodox Jews, feminism and people's incomes – always, she approaches her subjects in the same non-judgmental manner, which seems to put people at ease. That's ideal for this new three-part series shining a light on the supposedly exclusive world of private medical care, where she finds not only patients who are wealthy, but also others whose care is paid for by foreign governments or in some cases by charities. It seems that the people who frequent central London's famous street and its surrounding health facilities don't always fit the stereotype of rich, image-conscious celebs.

Code of a Killer

ITV, 9pm

The main suspect is released to a storm of controversy, and with the killer of the two schoolgirls still at large, Baker proposes the ambitious plan of testing the blood of every male in the area between the ages of 18 and 34 – the world's first DNA manhunt. But he and Jeffreys face huge opposition from sceptics within the police and the community,

as well as the establishment. Can they get everyone to believe in the science? David Threlfall and John Simm star in the conclusion of the two-part drama.

TUESDAY
Live UEFA Champions League
ITV, 7.30pm

Atletico Madrid v Real Madrid (Kick-off 7.45pm). Coverage of the quarter-final first-leg match at the Estadio Vicente Calderon, as the Spanish rivals meet in a repeat of last season's final. Real won on that occasion and are ahead of Atletico in the La Liga standings, but they have come off second best in meetings between the two this season, with the hosts having beaten Carlo Ancelotti's men twice in the league and in the Copa del Rey. Mark Pougatch presents, with commentary by Clive Tyldesley and Andy Townsend, and analysis by Paul Scholes, Roy Keane and Lee Dixon.

WEDNESDAY

The Delivery Man
ITV, 9.30pm

New series. Comedy starring Darren Boyd as a disillusioned policeman who leaves his job to

train as a midwife on a busy maternity ward. Finding himself in a predominately female world, Mathew is soon joined by best pal and ex-cop Ian (Paddy McGuinness), who is hired as the hospital's security guard. In the first episode, a teenage dad tries to visit his pregnant girlfriend without her

parents finding out his identity, and new boy Mathew must decide whose side to take. Co-starring Fay Ripley, Alex Macqueen, Aisling Bea and Llewella Gideon.

THURSDAY
The Secret Life of the Pub
Channel 4, 10pm

It's been a tough few years for the pub industry – something that's been blamed on everything from cheap supermarket alcohol to the smoking ban – but it seems that despite it all, the local boozer still remains an institution, with the average British man spending a year

The Delivery Man, Wednesday, ITV, 9.30pm

and a half of his life popping up the bar. But apart from drinking, just what do they there? Is it all soul-searching and slanging matches, as the soaps would have you believe, or is banter the order of the day? This documentary rigs the Lord Nelson in London's East End with cameras to find out what the men, including old mates Cudge and Dodds and city boys Joel and George really talk about when women are not around.

FRIDAY

Secrets of Great British Castles
Channel 5, 8pm

For thousands of kids each year, Warwick Castle is a great excuse for a day trip from school. Get beyond the stuff some of us remember from our youth, and there's a lot more to this magnificent edifice than meets the eye, as historian Dan Jones reveals in this episode. For centuries it was a poisoned chalice to the Earls of Warwick who resided there, and its walls reverberate with stories of bloodshed, betrayal, murder and financial ruin. In 1068, a castle was built on the site by William the Conqueror, but 200 years later, the Beauchamp family turned it into the lavish stone fortress that still stands today. Dan sees for himself the incredible wealth and power the Beauchamps had during their 150-year dynasty.

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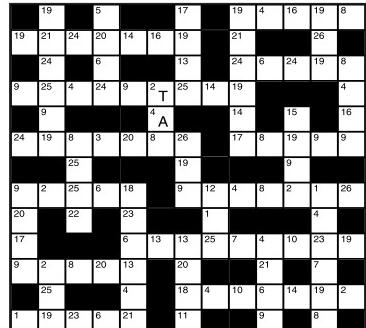
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PUZZLES

BRAIN GYM No.320

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

E	S	W	V	M	I	J	N	Q	X	H	O	K
R	U	C	A	L	Z	T	Y	G	D	P	F	B

Quiz

- Which Athenian philosopher died by drinking Hemlock?
- What nationality was Christopher Columbus?
- What is the largest city in Tanzania?
- Which Tudor warship is in a dry dock in Portsmouth?
- What was the main river of Hades in Greek mythology?
- Who created Maigret?
- What sort of creature is an axolotl?
- Who was the first woman MP to sit in the House of Commons?
- Where did Davy Crockett die?
- Who wrote The Murders in the Rue Morgue?



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Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

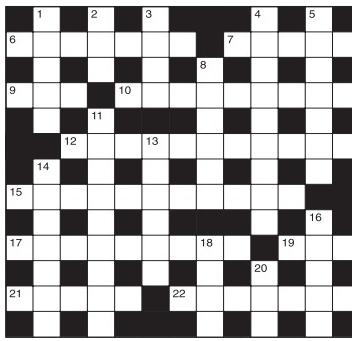
Cryptic Clues:

Across

- Sarcastic, witty fellow? (7)
- Companies producing manuscript on tree (5)
- 9 & 2Dn. Not times past for the Poles? (3,3)
- For example, rogue is out to be shocking (9)
- Finished everywhere in company (3,4,4)
- Point vessel out to follow in skilful display (11)
- Doctor hasn't got a smoothing tool or a flying machine (9)
- Became master of 16 without me (3)
- Again a manuscript takes lots of paper (5)
- Wet seen to remove bitterness (7)
- Do they light underground tunnels? (4-5)
- Ring to recover by word of mouth (6)
- Marksman could well be hot and sore (7)
- Portent to the west for humans (5)
- Creature went wrong... (4)
- ...became fresh, having lost tail (3)

Down

- A thumping good drinker? (5)
- See 9 Across
- Cosy now weapons have been put up (4)
- Be untruthful during delay and prepare to ambush (3,2,4)
- Sums of money required because horse put inside (7)
- They may currently show consumption (6)
- Do they light underground tunnels? (4-5)
- Ring to recover by word of mouth (6)
- Marksman could well be hot and sore (7)
- Portent to the west for humans (5)
- Creature went wrong... (4)
- ...became fresh, having lost tail (3)



Quick Clues:

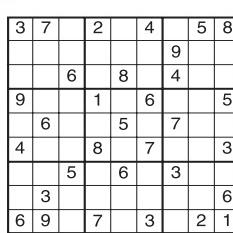
Across

- Scorn (7)
- Handed out (5)
- Embrace (3)
- Reputive (9)
- Agree (9)
- Deceive (11)
- Piercing (11)
- Competitor (9)
- Leap (6)
- Go round (7)
- Stop (5)
- Rim (4)
- Opposed (7)

Down

- Ill-feeling (5)
- Strange (3)
- Quoit (4)
- Repulsive (9)
- Pacify (7)
- Top (6)
- Amusing (9)
- Leap (6)
- Go round (7)
- Stop (5)
- Rim (4)
- Opposed (7)

Sudoku



Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

5	4	7	1	8	2	3	9	6
1	2	5	3	9	4	7	8	3
3	8	6	4	5	1	7	4	9
4	1	5	9	7	8	6	3	2
3	8	2	6	5	1	7	4	9
7	6	3	4	2	3	8	5	1
2	9	4	3	6	5	1	8	7
6	7	1	8	9	4	5	2	3
8	5	3	2	1	7	9	6	4

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC - Across: 7 Radiolocation; 8 Distance; 9 Edge; 10 Gallic; 12 Nature; 14 Second; 16 Docile; 18 Plat; 20 Impaler; 22 Making Believe; Down: 1 Battering; 2 Piping; 3 Screened; 5 Street; 6 Long; 11 Codings; 13 Relative; 15 Obtain; 17 Colle; 19 Lead; 21 Peer; QUICK - Across: 7 Reprehensible; 8 Momentum; 9 Gate; 10 Venetian; 12 Careful; 14 Stream; 16 Leader; 18 Chisel; 20 Mandate; 22 Short-sightedness; Down: 1 Redolent; 2 Grieve; 3 Shut; 4 Inimitable; 5 Linger; 6 Clot; 11 Remember; 13 Elevator; 15 Escape; 17 Accuse; 19 Hoop; 21 Glen.

Thinking space

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

7983 gives a bird,
62185 gives another bird,
7654 gives an animal.



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Stunning five-bed home available for £249,900



THIS immaculately refurbished stunning five-bedroomed semi-detached property in Moat Road, Oldbury has been finished to an extremely high specification, including a speaker system and CCTV. It is on the market for £249,900.

It has an entrance porch with spotlights and tiled flooring, an entrance hall with spotlights, laminate flooring and stairs off, a lounge with laminate flooring and oak double doors to a new kitchen/diner with soft close units and granite working surfaces, under floor heating, laminated and tiled flooring, double doors to the garden, a five-ring gas hob with extractor above and marble splash back, an electric oven and grill, space for an American-style fridge freezer, central island unit with coloured mood effect lighting above, mood effect lighting to base units, utility, downstairs shower room, five bedrooms and a bathroom, shower room and rear garden.

Contact Bairstow Eves on 0121 5444554 or visit www.bairstoweves.co.uk



Deceptively spacious well-presented home

A WELL-PRESENTED, improved and deceptively spacious extended semi-detached home in a cul-de-sac, 37 Leslie Road, Tividale is an ideal first time purchase.

It is for sale through Braithwaites at £124,950.

With gas central heating and double glazing it has a porch, an entrance hall with laminate flooring, a spacious through lounge/dining area, with patio doors and laminate flooring, extended kitchen with a dining area with part tiled/part laminate flooring, three bedrooms with laminate flooring and a bathroom with a bath with a shower and a front and rear garden.

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ROWLEY REGIS, Powke Lane £895 pcm+fees
A modern style detached house on spacious corner plot with close proximity to local shops, schools and amenities. Features entrance hall, lounge, dining room, breakfast kitchen, utility and guest w.c. 4 generous bedrooms, family bathroom and en suite to master bedroom to the 1st floor. The property further benefits from having an integral garage, driveway, good gardens to front, side and rear, gas central heating and double glazing. EPC: C



BIRMINGHAM, Orion Building £800 pcm+fees
An fantastic opportunity to rent a fully furnished apartment in the heart of Birmingham City Centre. This 1 bed modern property overlooking the Mailbox features open plan living with 24 hour concierge service and secure underground parking (permit required), double glazed and electric heating. Viewings highly recommended. EPC: C



KIDDERMINSTER, Grosvenor Avenue £795 pcm+fees
Stunning 3 storey town house in a quiet cul-de-sac position within walking distance of Kidderminster train station. Completely refurbished to a very high standard. Front reception room, lounge with feature fireplace with wood-burner, modern fitted kitchen with appliances, 3 large double bedrooms, beautiful bathroom with separate shower cubicle and a roll edged clawed foot free standing bath. Not to be missed. EPC: E



QUINTON, Ridgegate Lane £750 ppcm+fees
Beautifully redecorated 3 bed detached house, convenient for the number 9 bus into Birmingham. This property will not last long and features 2 doubles and 1 single bedroom, 2 reception rooms, office room, large kitchen diner with fridge freezer, brand new bathroom with shower, driveway for 1 car, large rear and side garden. EPC: E



HALESOWEN, Downing Street £995 pcm+fees
An immaculately presented and recently modernised semi-detached home, centrally located to Halesowen Town Centre, comprising of 3 good size bedrooms with fitted wardrobes, fitted kitchen with white goods, stunning lounge and separate dining room, family bathroom with shower, downstairs WC, gas central heating, double glazed, driveway parking, large rear garden, part furnished. A MUST SEE PROPERTY. EPC: E



HALESOWEN, Shipton Lane £950 pcm+fees
A fabulously spacious family home, set in an elevated position on a popular road. The property has been fully refurbished throughout, featuring a new kitchen with integrated appliances, 3 large bedrooms, new bathroom, and a good size lounge/diner with French doors leading to a patio and a garden set over different levels. A garage and driveway completes the home. EPC: E



ROWLEY REGIS, Alwin Road £650 pcm+fees
A delightful detached house which has been fully refurbished and comprises of: entrance hall, large lounge with dining area, newly fitted kitchen, 3 good size bedrooms & white bathroom with shower, gas central heating, driveway parking for 2 cars. EPC: D Available Now.



HALESOWEN, Sunbury Road £650 pcm+fees
Set in a quiet cul-de-sac and in the catchment area for Windsor High School. Featuring 3 bedrooms, 1 large lounge, dining area, modern kitchen, downstairs bathroom with shower, low maintenance rear garden, driveway parking.



STOURBRIDGE, Stourbridge Road £595 pcm+fees
An un furnished 3 bedroom mid terraced property with off road parking to the rear, close to local amenities and main bus routes. The property is well presented and conveniently located. Lounge, entrance porch/hallway, lounge with feature fireplace, modern kitchen with appliances, 3 good size bedrooms, modern bathroom with shower, private rear garden. Available Now. EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Fatherless Barn Crescent £550 pcm+fees
An unfurnished 3 bedroom semi detached family home within the catchment area for Colley Lane Primary School and the number 9 bus. Featuring an entrance hall, lounge, dining room, kitchen & utility, 3 good size bedrooms & upstairs walk in shower room. Large rear garden & driveway. Available Now. EPC: C



HALESOWEN, Malt Mill Lane £535 pcm+fees
An unfurnished mid terraced house, within walking distance to Blackheath Town Centre and not far from Rowley Regis train station, briefly comprising of: 2 reception rooms, fitted kitchen, downstairs shower room, 2 double bedrooms. Benefits include rear garden, off road parking. EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Witton Bank £525 pcm+fees
1ST MONTHS RENT HALF PRICE! A well presented 2 bedroom 2nd floor apartment in a very sought after location. Having secure intercom entry, entrance hall, 2 double bedrooms, bathroom with shower, large lounge, kitchen, garage en block and communal gardens. Available immediately. EPC: C



ROWLEY REGIS, Hanover Road £499 pcm+fees
A well presented modern ground floor apartment featuring a fitted kitchen, lounge, 2 bedrooms, 1 master en-suite, bathroom and shower. Allocated parking to rear, electric heating and double glazing. EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Cavalier Drive £495 pcm+fees
located within walking distance of central Halesowen. This modern unfurnished 3rd floor apartment, briefly comprising of: spacious living room with a door leading to your own balcony, fitted kitchen with white goods, 2 bedrooms, bathroom with shower, communal gardens, allocated parking space. EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Ladysmith Road £495 pcm+fees
A mid terraced house in a sought after area for Colley Lane Primary School, bus links to Halesowen and Stourbridge. This house features 2 reception rooms, fitted kitchen with oven/hob, dining area, new downstairs shower room, 2 good size bedrooms, double glazing, gas central heating, rear garden.



DUDLEY, Lantern Road £495 pcm+fees
1ST MONTHS RENT HALF PRICE! A beautifully presented mid terraced home close to local amenities. Featuring 2 bedrooms, modern fitted kitchen, spacious lounge, double glazing, gas central heating, rear garden and patio area, allocated parking. EPC: D



KIDDERMINSTER, Keats Place £485 pcm+fees
A well presented 2 bedroom ground floor flat, having accommodation including: hall, lounge, refitted kitchen with appliances, 2 bedrooms, bathroom, gas central heating, double glazing and cul de sac location. Virgin Broadband connection is available. Own entrance to the property. EPC: C



TIPTON, Anchor Drive £475 pcm+fees
Modern and comfortable living. A 3rd floor apartment within easy access to Dudley, Tipton and the M5. Featuring 2 double bedrooms, modern kitchen, white bathroom suite with shower, spacious lounge with patio doors opening to a Juliet balcony, electric heating, double glazing, garage. EPC: C



HALESOWEN, Belgrave Road £425 pcm+fees
A large ground floor modern apartment within walking distance to Blackheath Town Centre and local buses. Featuring a spacious lounge, fitted kitchen with oven/hob, 1 double bedroom, newly fitted bathroom suite with shower. Gas central heating, small rear garden with private entrance. Available Now. EPC: E



OLD BURY, Causeway Green Road £425 pcm+fees
This large, split level flat above shops, within walking distance to bus links and close to J2 of the M5, briefly comprising of: gas central heating, spacious living room, fitted kitchen, 2 double bedrooms, bathroom with shower, parking to rear, unfurnished. EPC: E



LYE, High Street £375 pcm+fees
Fully refurbished in the centre of Lye. This spacious 2nd floor apartment features a lovely lounge, 1 double bedroom, bathroom, modern and contemporary kitchen/diner, electric heating, double glazing, on road parking. Available now. EPC: E

PROPERTY

Detached family house has been extended



AN extended and detached family home in Howley Grange Rod, Halesowen, has a re-fitted kitchen.

It is for sale through Humberstones Homes at a reduced price of £305,000. With gas central heating and double glazing it has a porch, an entrance hall with a tiled floor, study/play room, a lounge/diner, conservatory with laminate flooring, a kitchen with a double oven, gas hob, dishwasher, fridge and down-lighters, inner lobby, utility, WC, four bedrooms and a bathroom, a block paved driveway and gardens. Contact Humberstones Homes on 0121 4221188 or visit the website www.humberstoneshomes.co.uk



Four-bedroom property is just like a show home



IMMACULATE four-bedroomed home, 71 Vicarage Road, Wollaston, is presented to show home standards in a prestigious address.

It is for sale through The Lee Shaw Partnership at £325,000. With central heating and majority double glazing, it has a porch with a tiled floor and 'port-hole' window, a dining hall with a fire surround and mantel, stairs off and WC, a lounge with a bay window and feature fire surround, a garden room with French doors, a kitchen with solid oak tops, breakfast bar, Rangemaster cooker hood and fridge, freezer, dishwasher, four bedrooms (two with fitted furniture), an enlarged bathroom, a garage and driveway, paved patio with BBQ, conservatory, garden with pergola and ponds. Contact The Lee Shaw Partnership on 01562 888111 or visit www.leeshaw.com



This hybrid is a great choice

By Graham Breeze

It's little wonder that Slimming World, the weight loss organisation, has bought a fleet of Lexus hybrids – expect many more companies to follow suit.

The company recently signed a deal to provide 76 cars for its managers, the largest solus fleet agreement yet secured by Lexus. You can expect many more companies to recognise the benefits of driving the IS 300h with low emissions, lower fuel bills, reduced road tax along with luxury performance.

There's a growing movement among British businesses to embrace hybrid as the common sense choice for their vehicle fleets and this Lexus ticks all the boxes.



Today's companies are recognising the benefit-in-kind company car tax rates as a priority when making a buying choice and Lexus is proving its hybrid models have the reliability and long-lasting quality to keep costs down.

And if we needed more convincing about the qualities of this Lexus it couldn't have come from a better place with the canny Association of Scottish Motoring Writers naming the model as Executive Car Of The Year.

Launched in 2013, the latest IS displays the cutting edge styling that sets today's Lexus models apart from the crowd. Now hybrid technology delivers higher efficiency, impressive reliability and lower tax and fuel bills.

So why exactly is everyone raving about this model?

It simply makes sense for the fleet buyer with a top speed of 125mph, 0-62mph in 8.3secs, 44.2mpg, CO₂ emissions of only 103g/km, benefit in kind levels at 13%, insurance group levels at 32E and a price tag of only £30,995.

The IS300h is a stunning looking car too, standing on 17" alloys and I particularly like the LED daytime running lights and HID bi-xenon headlamps.

There's a new and attractive cockpit where you quickly feel at home with comfortable seating up front and ample room for six footers in the back – though you wouldn't want to travel as a middle seat passenger in the rear.

You also get 60-40 split-folding rear seats and the IS 300h has a massive boot space.



'This Lexus is a joy to drive with firmed up suspension and is a great motorway cruiser, shutting out nearly every whisper of noise.'

There's all the technology you need as standard on this model. You get drive mode select, cruise control, smart entry and start, sound control, six-speaker audio system, 7" multimedia screen with remote dial control, rear view camera, Bluetooth, USB ports, dusk-sensing headlights, rain-sensing wipers and all-round parking sensors.

You also get all the safety measures you would expect from a luxury performer. There's driver and passenger front, side and knee airbags; curtain airbags, ABS,

Vehicle Stability Control, traction control, hill start assist and tyre pressure warning.

This Lexus is a joy to drive with firmed up suspension and is a great motorway cruiser, shutting out nearly every whisper of wind and road noise and running silently on electric only power in town traffic.

Audi and BMW provide most of the competition in the segment but Toyota aren't targeting massive sales from their luxury Lexus brand and with a few more deals like Slimming World's will soon be popping the champagne corks.

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Sure-footed when going gets tough

By John Griffiths

SEAT's latest model is certainly different: it's the first car I've ever driven that's fitted with an altimeter!

Another gadget for drivers, or an indication that the Spanish company is currently one of the real high-fliers in the car world?

Its UK sales were up 18 per cent last year – well above the national average – thanks in no small part to the much-admired Leon.

The family hatchback was joined last year by the sporting Cupra then the ST compact estate and sales really took off.

Now there's another new version, the X-Perience: a 'lifestyle' estate based on the ST but with the addition of the VW Group's proven Haldex four-wheel drive system.

It also heralds the launch next year of a new to SEAT range of SUVs, due to arrive here next year, which are likely to be based on similar underpinnings.

The altimeter, of course, is a bit of a gimmick. It's part of a digital display which pops up on the Satnav screen, along with a compass, when you venture off-road where there are no roads to display.

Since the ST is already a popular model, things are looking good for SEAT's dealers as there is not too much competition in this particular class. One of those rivals, for example, is available only with a 2.5 litre petrol engine (and costs more) while the X-Perience comes with a choice of two economical diesels. Both are 2.0 litre turbocharged units, a 150PS version with six-speed manual gearbox and the upgraded 184PS engine reserved for cars with the VW Group's brilliant DSG automatic/manual transmission.

There are two trim levels, with prices ranging from £24,385 to £28,870.

While it is a 4x4, the X-Perience isn't designed as a serious mud-plugger but more of a softroader, intended for those who's work or play requires the occasional off-road foray such as forestry tracks.

Recognising that, it has 15mm extra ground clearance over the standard ST but the '4Drive' system as SEAT calls it is the latest incarnation of the Haldex system which is entirely automatic and helps to keep you safe on road in all types of weather.

Essentially all the power goes to the front wheels in normal conditions but under heavy load, or in slippery conditions such as mud, gravel, ice and snow, up to 50 per cent of the torque is transferred to the rear. Then the dynamic stability and traction control decide whether there is more grip under the left or right wheels. You can actually feel it in action on the loose surface of the forest tracks, pushing the car round the corners to counteract understeer.

SEAT's engineers have found a good compromise with the suspension and damping, so while the car feels quite dynamic on twisty B-roads you don't get your teeth rattled when you do venture onto the rough stuff. Both engines are quiet, too. Despite their differences in output, though, both are capable of averaging 57.6mpg with a CO₂ rating of 129g/km.

The 150PS version is pretty quick, tackling the 0 to 62mph dash in 8.7 seconds while the uprated version with the DSG gearbox is even quicker, at an impressive 7.1 seconds.

The DSG, dual clutch transmission is a fast and 'intelligent' way of changing gears which, in my opinion, is superior to older torque converter autos – the figures illustrate that – and for enthusiastic drivers also allows for ultra quick manual changes, using 'paddles' behind the steering wheel.

The combination of higher powered engine and DSG adds around £2,500 to the showroom price, which might seem quite a jump but it also comes in the model with the highest standard equipment levels.

Like the award-winning family hatchback, on which it is based, it has plenty of room for five but with the addition of a rear cargo area for extra versatility. It holds at impressive 587 litres of luggage with five on board – more than many big saloons – extending to 1,470 litres with all three rear seats folded flat. Roof rails add to its load-carrying ability.

As the new X-Perience sits alongside the sporty Cupra as the flagship of the Leon range, equipment levels are impressive, too. Alloy wheels, cruise control, climate control, tinted rear windows, touch screen infotainment system and rear parking sensors are standard, as well as all the usual items such as electric windows and mirrors.

For safety there are seven airbags and a full range of electronic stability and traction systems, plus an electronic differential lock and 'hill hold' control.

The higher grade, dubbed SE Technology, gets bigger alloys, additions to the infotainment package including touch screen controls, DAB radio plus satnav, LED headlights, 18-inch alloys, and front sports seats in alcantara and leather.

And, oh be joyful, there's a real spare wheel. Those of you who have had a puncture and whose car is supplied with a foam inflator kit instead of a spare will know what I mean.

The interior of the X-Perience is a relaxing place to be. Roomy, quiet and comfortable with easy performance will be features familiar to anyone who has driven the hugely popular hatchback, but with the extra versatility of an estate which will add to the appeal for family or business users.

But it also adds the reassurance of a proven four wheel drive system which adds little weight and doesn't sap performance for those times when the going gets tough, whether it's winter weather, a muddy camp site or gymkhana field.



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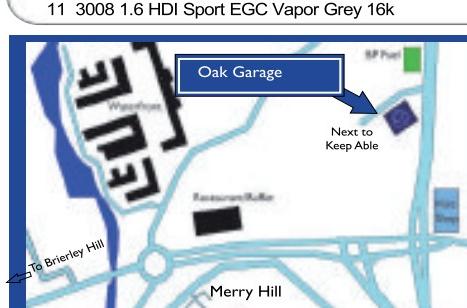
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ROVER 420 SALOON 1999, 70,000 miles, blue, electric windows, AC, FSH, MoT 6 months, PAS, diesel, alloy CD, £895 one 01841 213454.

ROVER 75 Club diesel, 2002, 79,000 miles, 3 months MoT, bouncy, EW, CD, CL, 5-dr, good condition. £900. 07956 141704.

ROVER METRO KENSINGTON 100 1995, 26,000 miles, FSH, excellent runner, MoT. £395. 07906 475906.

SUZUKI JIMMY JLX 1298CC W Reg., 88,600 miles, MoT Sept 2015, £1,000 one. 07971 279968.

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MALE 57, seeking female, any age/looks for no strings fun.

WIDOWER 70's, lonely, educated, well travelled, reliable, tactile, seeks fun, N/S lady for friendship and more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416057

STELLA 50, gorgeous, voluptuous and all women seeks sensual older male, who knows just what he wants for lots of naughty fun and TLC. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415429

MARIA gorgeous, leggy blonde seeks tall professional male for fun nights out, cosy nights in with plenty of TLC and romance. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415429

SUSAN 44, stunning curly blonde, fit and active seeks happy go lucky male for good conversation, fun times, maybe more. ACA Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416091

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PALUA 40, sensual, young at heart brunette looking for some fun and romance with a tall outgoing male. Call if you feel the same. ACA Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416681

VAL 41, pretty, curly, shiny, seeks similar fun loving male for an uncomplicated no strings relationship. Age/looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416681

EILEEN 49, lovely Brunette, adventurous and eager to please seeks intelligent male to share the fun side of life together. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416681

TALL, dark, slim, attractive guy, 48, seeks attractive female for no strings fun times. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 383425

MALE 60, N/S, average looks, black hair, likes meals out, sees female, 50-70, looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 383425

CHRISTINE 48, shy sensitive blonde looking for lively older male to make her smile again and bring back some passion. s Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416519

TALL, dark, attractive guy 50, seeks attractive female for fun, excitement and lots of attention. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 314219

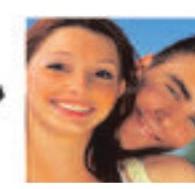
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BLUE eyed male, black hair, 6ft 4ins, likes football, nights out, farming, seeking female for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416481

PAUL 56, works part time, seeking nice lady, 55-65 with GSOH, honest, genuine and understanding. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416017



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BEAUTIFUL full figured, down to earth black woman, 37, looking for some serious fun with an experienced, confident, older guy. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416493

SINCERE lady, seeks similar guy/lover preferred, 60-67, 5ft 6ins - so slightly taller than me. N/S, car owner and likes a dog. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416471

KAREN 5ft 5ins, blonde hair, blue eyes, slim, seeks male. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416337

JUNE 50, beautiful, funny, warm, young looking blonde WLTM attractive down to earth male for fun strings fun, laughter and love. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416299

ADVENTUROUS sexy, lady, 38yrs, married but seeks no strings fun with discreet man, any age. I'm tall, slim and dominant. Aca Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416307

DAWN attractive, easygoing, WLTM well built mature male for fun loving no strings romance. Status unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416309

FEMALE Brunette, attractive, 26, seeking male for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416309

PAT 5ft 2ins, medium build, attractive, blonde hair, widow, seeking N/S, sincere gent for friendship and days out. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416057

ALICE 36, tall and slim with long hair, seeks a boyfriend for fun strings fun,寻求 funny intelligent guy to share active days and cosy nights. Age/looks not important. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416087

KIANE 33, pretty blonde seeks down to earth, sensitive, good natured, friendly, caring and considerate, older male for fun strings fun, laughter and love. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416087

DIANE 33, sensual, tactile and loving, seeks male for interesting conversations and come intimate nights together. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416087

BRIDGET 48, voluptuous, seductive and very saucy, seeks male for lots of TLC and to make very happy in return. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416083

TARA, confident lady, long legs, long hair, seeks a saucy man of any age for daytime, no strings fun. Tel No: 0906 005 2193 Box No: 414701

MARIA gorgeous, leggy blonde seeks tall professional male for fun nights out, cosy nights in with plenty of TLC and romance. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416861

SUSAN 44, stunning curly blonde, fit and active seeks happy go lucky male for good conversation, fun times, maybe more. ACA Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416779

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MALE young 62, medium build, likes sports, golf, holidays, food, beer, seeks lady for nights out. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416643

LYNN 49, young looking, seeks black female, 21-30 for loving relationship and fun. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416643

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Blues let lead slip away as Cherries fight back

Bournemouth 4 Blues 2

BOURNEMOUTH fought back from two goals down to return to the top of the Championship with a thrilling 4-2 triumph over 10-man Birmingham.

Strikes from Steve Cook, Calum Wilson, Charlie Daniels and a Yann Kermorgant penalty helped Bournemouth equal their club record of 104 goals in a single season.

Birmingham, who had captain Paul Robinson sent off late on, looked to be heading for a surprise win when Clayton Donaldson and David Cotterill struck in three first-half minutes.

Donaldson showed how to finish in the 19th minute, racing in between the centre-back pairing of Cook and Tommy Elphick before calmly lifting the ball over the on-rushing Artur Boruc and into the net.

Cotterill doubled the Blues' lead only three minutes later with another superbly-taken goal.

Cook gave Bournemouth a lifeline in the 39th minute by bundling home from close range after keeper Darren Randolph flapped at Matt Ritchie's corner.

The Cherries drew level on the stroke of half-time when Harry Arter split the Birmingham defence with a delightful through-ball for Wilson to round Randolph and tap into an empty net.

Kermorgant completed the comeback from the spot three minutes after the interval following Robinson's clumsy foul on Wilson. And home captain Elphick came within inches of extending the lead with a 58th-minute header against the crossbar. Daniels then added his name to the scoresheet.

Villa put freeze on the price of season tickets

VILLA have announced a freeze on season ticket prices for next season.

The move comes after what chief executive Tom Fox described as a "challenging period" for the club.

Prices will again range between £335 and £615 for the second straight year.

Fox said: "We have decided to freeze season ticket prices as we know it has been a challenging period for the club."

"We value the continued support of our existing season ticket holders and want to encourage new and returning supporters back to Villa Park," he added.

Villa are currently sitting at 16th position in the Premier League table, three points above the relegation zone with six games remaining.

This weekend they travel away to face Spurs.

Club bolsters side with Ellison

HALESOWEN have snapped up Harry Ellison, son of former Kent and England seamer Richard, to bolster their side ahead of the new season.

Ellison joins after talking to Will Barrett, who is skipper of his University side and will also be turning out for Halesowen this year.

A middle order batsman and occasional bowler, Ellison joins from Somerset side Glastonbury who play in the West of England Premier League where he scored over 400 runs last season in 14 knocks at a healthy 30 average.

And he said: "I share a house in Cambridge with Will Barrett and, of course, we play together for the University. We'll travel together to matches and now

the weather has improved I can't wait for the season to start, in earnest."

Ellison joins former Brockhampton duo Barrett and Ben Stebbings at Halesowen this season – and Chairman Richard Evans says the club aren't finished yet with new faces.

He said: "We are delighted that Harry has agreed to join us and we look forward to welcoming him and his father to the club in due course.

"It's fair to say though we'll be looking to Harry to do the business with the bat, rather than the ball!"

"We are still talking to another player and hope to bring that deal to a conclusion in the very near future. Harry's signing, together with that of Ben

and Will, are just reward for the massive effort put in behind the scenes this winter."

The season opens this Sunday, April 12, when the club host Barrow CC who are on a pre-season tour and play in the Cheshire League.

Halesowen's Birmingham League season starts on Saturday April 25 when the first XI travel to Tamworth whilst the second XI host the reverse fixture.

Meanwhile tickets are selling fast for the club's first-ever Darts Exhibition with charismatic former World semi-finalist Wayne 'Hawai 501' Mardle on Wednesday April 29. The evening will also feature a Q&A. Tickets are £10 and available from the club or from any club official.

Benteke hat-trick saves Villa's skin

Villa 3 QPR 3

CHRISTIAN BENTEKE'S hat-trick rescued a crucial point for Villa in a thrilling 3-3 draw with relegation rivals QPR.

The striker levelled to complete his treble with just seven minutes left after QPR looked to have done enough to climb out of the bottom three and leapfrog Villa.

Clin Hill and Charlie Austin had fired Rangers 3-2 ahead after the break following Benteke's first-half double.

He had cancelled out Matt Phillips' opener but the draw did little for either side's survival hopes.

Villa moved three points clear of the Premier League relegation zone while Rangers climbed to third bottom, still two points from safety.

Jack Grealish made his first league start for Villa as the fit-again Ron Vlaar and Tom Cleverley returned along with Leandro Bacuna and Kieran Richardson.

QPR's Eduardo Vargas, out for the season with a knee injury, and Yun Suk-young, sidelined with a head injury, were replaced by Niko Kranjcar and Hill.

Breathless

Villa boss Tim Sherwood had predicted a full-blooded attacking game and Rangers, lifted by their second away win of the season at Albion on Saturday, fulfilled their part in a breathless first half by opening the scoring after seven minutes.

Austin's cross was not cleared and Bobby Zamora picked up the pieces to centre for Phillips to nod in unmarked from six yards.

Yet Villa levelled just 151 seconds later when Fabian Delph played in Benteke and the striker was given too much time to cut in from the left and his shot deflected off Steven Caulker and past Rob Green.

The keeper then gathered Grealish's free-kick as the game reached breakneck speed before the youngster wasted a glorious chance on 16 minutes.

Benteke was set free on the left and when Caulker failed to deal with the cross, Green saved at the feet of Grealish.

But Benteke clawed Villa back again when he curled in a 25-yard free-kick off the post.

It's do or die time for Reanne



Snooper player Reanne Evans is looking to achieve a unique feat in snooker

REANNE EVANS insists her World Championship bid is 'do or die' for women in snooker.

The 29-year-old from Dudley is aiming to be the first woman to qualify for the World Championship in Sheffield this month when she faces former champion Ken Doherty in qualifying.

Evans has won 10 women's world titles and plays Irishman Doherty at Pond's Forge in Shef-

field today. And, while her profile is dwarfed by the men's game, Evans knows she must take her chance.

"As much as it's brilliant, you get the added pressure. I'm do or die for the ladies. You have to accept it, that's the way it is," she said. "I hope it all goes in the right direction. It's going to take time and I'm getting old now, all the wrinkles are showing."

"If I don't get to play (in the main draw), I hope (my attempt to qualify) will inspire the young girls because they need to see a future in the game."

Opponent Doherty won the Crucible title in 1997 but Evans admits she is dreaming of making the main draw, which will require her and all the other 128 entrants to the preliminary draw to win three best-of-19-frame matches.

Yeltz reach a dozen without a victory

Blyth Spartans 2 Halesowen 1

HALESOWEN's worrying run of games without a win stretched to 12 as they beat them into the Evo-Stik Premier derby with Stourbridge in poor form.

The Yeltz failed to create many chances against a team who are well within reach of the play-offs.

The first half was a dour affair, with few opportunities for either side to score, though Aaron Lloyd, starting his first game for Halesowen, saw an under-hit shot saved which was one of the few highlights of the first part of the match.

For Blyth, Michael Richardson was called into action and produced a save from a Sam Pearson shot on goal.

Pearson also produced an excellent stop from Dan Maguire as he continued to impress in the first period.

Maguire went close again early in the second half when he collected a loose ball midway inside the Yeltz half and burst forward but fired past Pearson's far post.

Spartans began to dictate play and took the lead on the hour when Maguire was brought down in the area by Curtis Tilt and Stephen Turnbull converted the penalty.

Richardson hit the top of the crossbar with 20 minutes remaining but on 76 minutes he made no mistake when set up by Maguire who did the hard work in the build up.

Iyseden Christie did bring some relief for the Yeltz when he got Halesowen's consolation late on with a brilliantly curling free-kick after Danny Bragoli had been fouled.

Red card was harsh, says Mulumbu

ALBION midfielder Youssouf Mulumbu claims his red card for elbowing QPR captain Joey Barton was harsh and insists: "I never meant to hurt anyone".

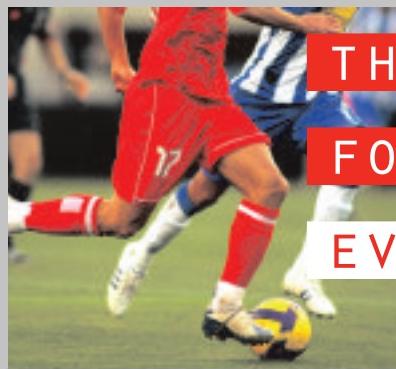
Mulumbu took to Twitter to apologise to his team-mates yesterday after he was dismissed just 11 minutes after joining the game as a substitute.

"I think it's harsh but that's what it is," said Mulumbu, who received support from Barton after the game.

"I don't know if we'll appeal. I will speak with the club but when you look at the video it's very harsh."

"I didn't make any movement to hurt anybody so we will speak with the coach and the club and see what is the best way to sort this out."

Mulumbu received support from Barton, who cleared the defender of any suggestion of a deliberate elbow.



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